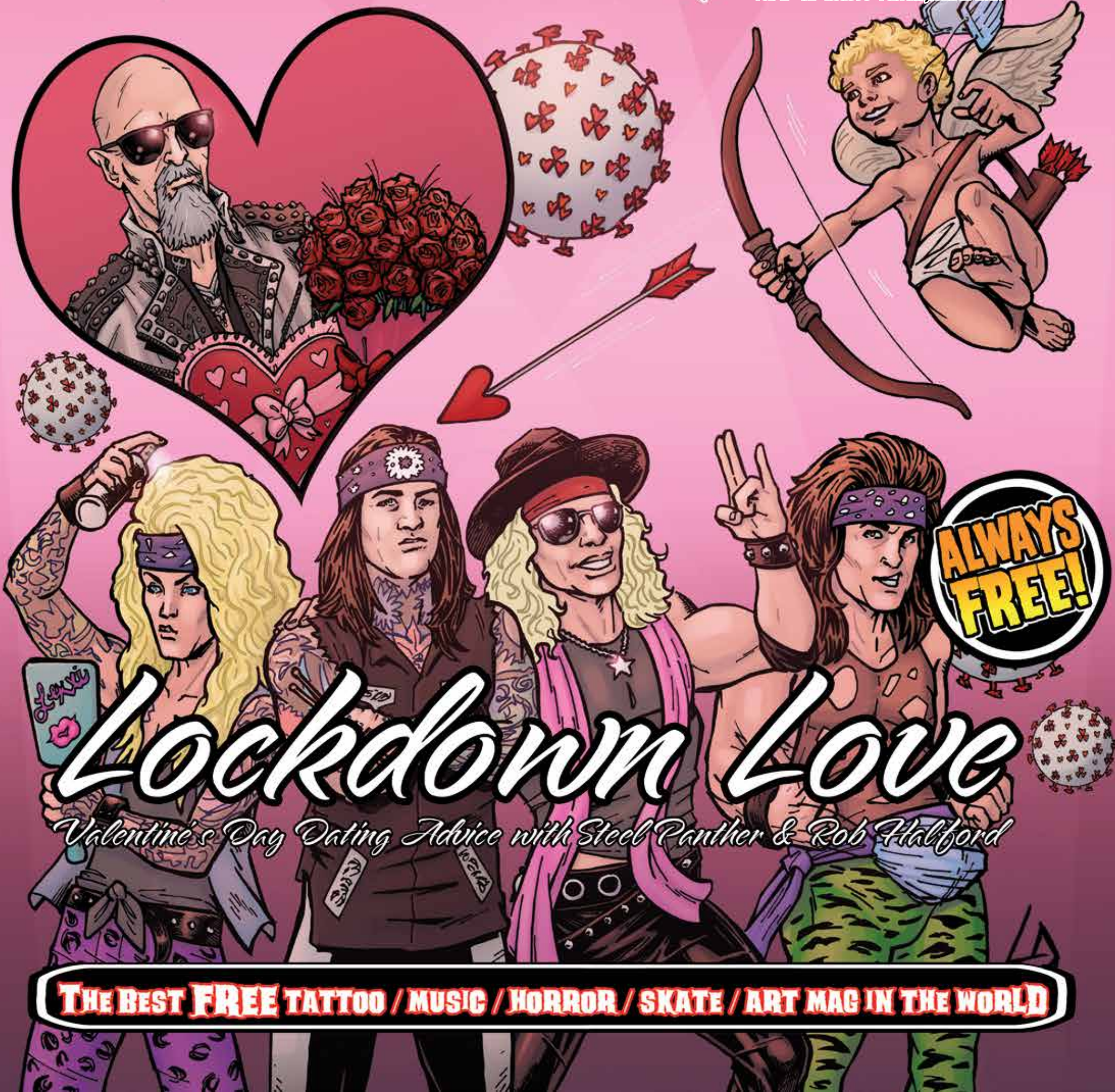


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ABSOLUTE UNDERGROUND

EST. 2004

Vol. 17 - #2 - Issue 98 - February/March 2021



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RULES

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COVERING THE UNDERGROUND
MUSIC SCENE SINCE 2004

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VICTORIA 
FILM FESTIVAL
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duality of its narrative shines both a scathing and painful spotlight on the tragedy of Japanese history.

Girls Can't Surf

Surf culture went mainstream in the 80s, professionalizing a counterculture sport and attracting major sponsorship deals. However, the free spirits riding this wave weren't

all full of peace, love, and empathy. Beneath the surface was a murky world of archaic male egos and bigotry. Women were paid a tenth of the prize money, pressured to compete in bikinis and relegated to holding professional contests during mens' lunch breaks.

Harry Chapin: When in Doubt, Do Something

It seems to be the year for documentaries that go beyond the dry retelling of someone's life and *Harry Chapin: When in Doubt, Do Something* vibrates with the warmth and charm that was this remarkable singer-songwriter's life. Chapin's ability to create great songs that told insightful defining stories ("Taxi," "A Better Place to Be") made him a household name, with "Cat's In The Hat" (written with his wife, Sandy) being his most memorable.

Director Rick Korn traces its cultural impact from DMC to Bruce Springsteen to *The Simpsons* to *Modern Family*. The song is as relevant now as the day it was written. Chapin is revealed to be not only a musician but also an effective advocate for ending world hunger. Co-founding WhyHunger, a global non-profit organization active to this day, Chapin performed over half of his concerts for no profit so that the box office proceeds could go to the charity. A woke man who acted rather than merely talking a good game. It's wonderful to have this remarkable man brought to life again.

Beast Beast

In a quiet southern town, popular and charismatic theatre kid Krista finds herself increasingly drawn to Nito, the new student in her high school who catches her attention with his impressive skating videos. The two share an easy rapport and quickly grow close. Unbeknownst to her, their lives and that of her gun-loving neighbour, Adam, will soon become intertwined—until they reach a breaking point.

Skyfire

If 2020 were a movie it would be Skyfire. From the director of *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* and *Con*

Air, we bring you *Skyfire* – a Chinese disaster action mega-production. Tianhuo Island, located in the world-famous Pacific Rim volcanic belt, is as beautiful as a paradise. The idyllic location almost makes people forget that it's in the area also infamously called the "Ring of Fire." When the volcano erupts, the fate of the people on the island is in the hands of a geologist and her father. The film has Jason Isaacs (*Harry Potter* series, *Peter Pan*, *The Death of Stalin*), Chinese superstars and is filled with action shots. So, get yourself some popcorn, maybe a good drink or two and enjoy some giant explosions. Because what else is there to do in life?

<https://2021.victoriafilmfestival.com/>

Going Digital:

Victoria Film Fest 2021

By Ed Sum

Nobody should be surprised that, for at least two thirds of this new year, most film festivals will continue on streaming platforms. Until a good portion of the population is inoculated, and are card carrying members of the "I got a vaccine" club, any celebration can become a breeding ground for new cases.

The Victoria Film Festival in the Capital City of British Columbia is making the transition, and there's a few films worth noting.

Most will be available for immediate viewing beginning Feb 5th to the 14th, and are restricted to residents of British Columbia to view.

For more information and buy tickets, please visit <https://2021.victoriafilmfestival.com/>

Labrynth of Cinema

At a hearty 179 minutes, those who make the effort will find in it, an ode to cinema. Clad in powerful anti-war regalia, *Labrynth of Cinema* ironically breaks many of the traditional structures within the films it has set out to celebrate. The

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Teenage Violets

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

TV: Teenage Violets. Chris, Dane, Garrett & Don.

Dane: I'm probably most infamous for taking off my shirt and spitting on certain parts of my anatomy. Probably most famous for my Grandmother.

Chris: Dane's Gran is our manager, she's the one who got us our sponsorship with Lysol.

AU: Give us a brief history of the band, who are you and how did you form?

Dane: Don and I played a few little gigs together as a two-piece playing this style of music. Chris and I played together at Logan's Hootenanny and he said that if I ever wanted to start a band to give him a call. About a year later I did. Our original drummer was Vince Vaccaro who showed up with a kick drum the size of a full-grown man.

Eventually Garrett took over on drums.

Garrett: I joined the band last. I held out until they offered me the most money.

Don: Hmm?

AU: Can you describe your sound, for those of us who've never heard you before?

Dane: Originally we played a lot of Little Richard, Elvis and old love songs we had written. After we released our last album the direction we're going in seems to be much more of a fuzzed out garage surf psychedelic monster just lathered in echo and reverb.

Garrett: My sound is: "Thud," "Whack," "Ping," "Zing," "Boom."

AU: What's new in the Teenage Violets camp, how have you been surviving and playing music during a pandemic?

Garrett: I've only really been playing music in my head during the pandemic. But I drum on tables, chairs, desk tops and car hoods all the time.

Dane: Yeah we really have not been playing since



the new restrictions but we fantasize about it quite often.

Chris: It's been fucking depressing. We played one show for Halloween and are working on four new tracks for an EP.

Garrett: They're so good they'll put us on Cardi B's radar. She'll get us a record deal.

Dane: Fuck

Chris: Oh christ.

AU: Are you releasing any new tunes or videos this year?

Chris: The EP at some point. Be nice to put a video to a single or two from that.

Don: We reordered four new songs mid-covid this Oct. Mixing 'em up now.

AU: Where will you play or tour first once Covid is over?

Dane: I'd like to say Logan's but that's probably not going to happen. Lucky maybe?

Chris: Ahh Logan's. Lucky would be nice. Probably play in Vinyl Envy too

Don: Anywhere that we're welcome... or not!

AU: Since this is our Valentines Day issue, what are your Valentines plans?

Don: I plan to eat chocolate. Don't date, just send pics instead.

Dane: My Valentine's Day will be spent looking after the puppies we're fostering. I guess my only advice for dating is follow the current government advice which is to use a glory hole

until things are normal again.

Chris: And then continue to use them. Just be careful with the sanitizer

Don: Oh man.

AU: Do you have any advice for dating during Covid?

Garrett: Dating advice? I haven't dated since the early "Oughts."

Chris: Get a cat or a hamster instead of dating. They'll never let you down. The hamster might.

AU: What does it say on the band members' Tinder Profiles?

Dane: Don't have one but I'm on Onlyfans as 'Squirtreynoldz' if you're curious.

Chris: Oh god, mine was deleted a long time ago.

AU: What else should we know about Teenage Violets that we don't already?

Garrett: We all secretly can't stand each other.

Don: Is that a secret?

Dane: We are very much into cinema and a good cup of coffee.

Chris: I glue carpet to the soles of my shoes so it feels like I'm walking on plush rugs all the time.

AU: Where can we keep up to date on the band and your music?

Chris: Bandcamp for all the music and Facebook and Instagram for shits and giggles

AU: Any final words for our readers?

Don: No

Chris: Be brave, stay moisturized and hydrated. It'll all be ok. Probably.

Dane: Antiquing

Don: Hmmm?

teenageviolets.bandcamp.com

PHOTO CREDIT: Darren Ho

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VANCOUVER VENGEANCE



Ape War

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

JN: Hey, I'm Jonno Nucleosis, I hold a guitar and am the longest running Ape War member at nearly a decade.

Danno: 2nd guitar

Matt: I play bass, but I prefer the title "Summoner of Thunder."

Joe: I'm Joe and I fight the drums

Dylan: I'm Dylan the vocalist/frontman

AU: Give us a brief history of the band, who is in the band and what are you all about?

Jonno: Sure, this is the heaviest, fastest lineup of this band, and this lineup has an EP on vinyl to add to the previous two, and a streaming EP. We're all about doing entertaining shows that maybe go off the rails, recording live to keep that energy up, and not being stuck in a genre—we make songs that we all like and love playing shows with mixed up genres.

Dan: We write things mostly together as a group. We definitely keep it simple (dumb) on purpose.

Matt: I disagree with calling it dumb, like it's not technically ambitious, but to me dumb is more like butt rock.

Kirk Hammet: C'mon guys, stop arguing

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.



Jonno: Well, it's a bit of a mutant; crusty thrash, punk, grindcore, hardcore covers it? Loud. We use the Fog of Loud to strike without warning! We really adhere to doing what we all like, for example if a song is great and it's 30 seconds long, we leave it. No need to go verse/chorus/verse to fill it out. No idea is not allowed, and we're all comfy rolling out weird ideas. Weirdness safe space.

Dan: We are trying to evolve slightly by including some more backup vocals to support Dylan and Joe is starting to try to incorporate a bit of double kick. So In the future Ape War might be a bit

fuller?

Matt: I think Johnny really encapsulated everything really nicely.

AU: You released an album recently, tell us about it! What can we expect to hear?

Jonno: There's two releases we'd like to hype. First, local punk space Black Lab made mix tapes to raise money to defund the Vancouver Police. There's three solid albums of songs, please check it out and drop them a few bucks if you can. We did a tune exclusively for this, "Pig on a Spit" where we used just the notes ACAB. Secondly, we did a split EP with our jamroom upstairs neighbours NEEDS called "Two Little Shits," out on vinyl. The limited green ones are sold out, but we have clear vinyl left, hit us up!

Matt: The Black Lab tapes are great and in support of such an important idea.

AU: Does the new album explore any particular themes or topics?

Dylan: The song "Rot System" is about capitalism poisoning earth.

Jonno: I feel like both us and NEEDS were pretty influenced by what was going on at the time of recording in early 2020. Listening back, the songs and vibe was that things were definitely looking grim.

AU: Any stand-out tracks you are stoked on?

Matt: I can never pick favourites...

Jonno: I'd say the newest one on the Black Lab mix tapes, it rips pretty hard

Dan: I'm proud what we did with 'Rot System' off of the split EP

AU: How have you been surviving the Apocalypse? Any survival tips to share?

Jonno: Not really... I mean, the quicker we get down to no new cases, the quicker we have shows etc again, like New Zealand and parts of Southeast Asia... I've been watching LOADS of band documentaries and live shows. Better than nothing!

AU: Any plans for a Covid Valentines this year?

Jonno: Nah, just another day. Why, is there something cool going on?

AU: What do you miss most about live music?

Dan: Leaving the house for it

Jonno: Seeing a *moment* that won't happen ever again. Seeing friends of course! Buying merch straight from a band.

Matt: All of the above, witnessing the power of a good set.

AU: Is Ape War going to have some songs coming out on a compilation album soon as well?

Jonno: Check out those Black Lab Mix Tapes! theblacklab.bandcamp.com/music GO NOW

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? Anything else to promote?

Jonno: We're always working on new music. As soon as venues open, we're show-ready.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

Jonno: Don't talk to Cops.

AU: How do people find you online?

Jonno: Bandcamp is where you can stream everything for free, and order records. Right now, if you buy that new one with NEEDS, we throw in the previous two records. <https://apewar1.bandcamp.com/music> Also Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/ApeWar>, and we have an olde tyme webpage in case we ditch social media, ape-war.ca. Have a look and subscribe so if we get digitally separated, we can find each other again!

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Red Cain

Interview submitted by Jon Asher

Absolute Underground: For Absolute Underground readers, how did Red Cain come to be?

Evgeniy Zayarny: We were formed in 2016 as the brainchild of, well, me who wanted to create a hybrid rock/metal project as a vehicle to tell epic and occult stories - a modern, complex take on bard songs in the same spirit as bands like Blind Guardian.

AU: How would you describe your sound in five words?

EZ: Melancholy and rage, drunken Slavic storytelling.

AU: Top five bands that your band sounds like that fans of them may enjoy.

EZ: Kamelot, Moonspell, Mastodon - Depeche Mode, Lord of the Lost are the usual suspects. Frankly, I could list 20 bands here and it still wouldn't be enough. We're casting a pretty wide net.

AU: Red Cain just released its second album *Kindred: Act II* digitally on Jan 22nd (and Sliptrick Records releasing it on CD later this year). We understand it's a continuation of the storyline in your debut album *Kindred Act: I*, how do think it will be received by fans compared to its predecessor?

EZ: We think the fans want to finally put the pieces to the puzzle together, and we hope this album will give them the keys to do so. Aside from this, we are still in the early stage of building that mythology around our work that every good band needs to have, and with *Kindred: Act II*, we are confident that we took a big step forward on this, not only thematically but in a musical sense. Fans will see that we can consistently produce quality material and continue evolving the Red Cain sound while also staying true to our direction, and that's an important quality to be able to demonstrate.

AU: For those unfamiliar with Red Cain's stories, can you give a brief background on Red Cain's epic chronicles through your music?

EZ: We wanted to create a fable, which meant keeping a timeless and relatively simple story on the surface, but colouring and fleshing it out in a unique way. We are also huge supporters of allowing the listeners space to insert guesses or assumptions, or personal interpretations into our lore. So, we intentionally left plenty of open spaces in the story itself, and in fact, much of it is told between the lines in the lyrics of the songs. The main thread centers around a young Aztec warrior, Zalcoatl, who is charged with bringing

his tribe the favour of the Sun God to keep the sun in the sky through ascending an ancient alien ziggurat. If he makes it to the top for a mano-a-mano with the deity, his tribe will be saved. But inside the pyramid, a malevolent force is waiting to entrap him in the past and future lives of other heroes and individuals, in the hopes to be released from its prison. So, the main story centers around the struggle of Zalcoatl and this Lovecraftian force and the lessons, victories, and defeats along the way in the guise of these other heroes throughout time, who may or may not be real, and may or may not be fighting the same battle.

AU: We noticed on the new record the band took a more mature approach, how was recording and writing this album compared to the first one? They say the first is always the hardest.

EZ: I can't say we found it challenging to do the actual album - in fact, it was energizing and we were completely fired up to create and create. We could likely have pumped out more tracks, and do have some loaded and waiting for future releases. Partially, it's because we are lucky to have some truly outstanding musicians as part of the band, and the technical elements were never in doubt. But also, there was a clear thematic direction and pretty much complete carte blanche in terms of style - so we ended up basically doing what we wanted, boundaries be damned. Which certainly made for an interesting record.

AU: How did you guys adapt to releasing an album in a pandemic era?

EZ: Practically, well. For recording, most of us have home studios and so it was pretty easy to throw ideas and recordings around, track separately, all of that. We definitely missed playing together, and just sitting together physically and making music, and had we done that, the album may have been a bit different, maybe more raw. As to releasing the album, well - that remains to be seen, but it is what it is, we have no choice but to make the best of it.

AU: We noticed you were giving fans custom pieces of digital art designed by the band during the album's pre-order, for those who were unfortunate it not getting these, how would you describe these pieces to them? Will there be more digital art

pieces offered by the band? Can fans see the art pieces online?

EZ: Absolutely, the art is available online and we will certainly be sharing the final two pieces very soon. The art is an integral part of the music itself, it is a necessary layer that completes the story of each track, and we took great care and attention to detail in creating it. We're still definitely looking for ways to leverage the pieces in other media and other merch, so watch for that. In terms of the direction, combining visual art and our music - we think it's very successful and plan to continue doing this in the future, and hopefully, the fans enjoy it!

AU: How have you been surviving the Apocalypse? Any survival tips to share?

EZ: For me personally, it was a chance to change up my daily routine, focus on some things that I generally passed by before COVID. I've been doing a lot more reading, I've taken a few online courses, focused on more... antisocial hobbies like shooting. And of course, from a musical perspective, less socialization gives you more time to think, which is always a good thing for anyone!

AU: How would you sum up this past 2020? And how do you think 2021 will turn out?

EZ: Challenging, challenging. In different ways for different people, to be sure. It's honestly difficult to understand how challenging it was and perhaps still is for some, and I do consider myself lucky to be where I am despite my own struggles. It puts things into perspective to face an actual crisis of this magnitude. The bigger challenge now is what we learn from it.

AU: Like many bands around the world, live shows are missed very much, does the band

have plans for its first show to play *Kindred: Act II* live? Is the band doing live streams in the meantime?

EZ: Our focus, for now, has been completely on this release and various elements related to it. We're working with the known quantities as of now since there is zero clarity on when live shows will return. As to live streams...it's something we considered, but weighing the options, we don't want to short sell our fans and would rather wait to see them in person. For now, we are looking at music videos as an alternative, and are super excited about some projects we have planned there.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? Anything else to promote?

EZ: Listen to the album and tell us what you think! COVID means less dialogue with fans at shows, where we spill beers and scream song lyrics at one another, so... do it on Instagram, do it on Facebook. We want to talk to you! Aside from that, check out our music videos. We're super proud of the ones we have, they've won awards, so some people, somewhere, apparently like them, and we put a TON of effort, attention to detail, creativity, story elements etc in there. Not to mention we will definitely have one or two coming for this album as we work on filming them around the current restrictions. We hope you have a look and we hope you enjoy our work!

AU: Any final words for our readers?

EZ: Keep powering through! As someone from a country (Russia) with literally thousands of years of experience of various bullshit, yet still going strong, things will get better, both for the world, the music business, and you personally. Create, fight, listen to good music, find good stories and write your own. And, of course, on a more practical note, support your local musicians - we're all in this together. Thanks for taking the time to read this!

redcain.bandcamp.com/album/kindred-act-ii
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Malice Divine

Interview submitted by Jon Asher

Absolute Underground: For Absolute Underground readers, please tell us how did Malice Divine come to be?

Ric Galvez: Malice Divine came to be during the time I was in my previous band, which was when I was writing most of the songs that would end up on the debut album. After I was fired from

the band, I was able to spend much more time finalizing the songs with lyrics, guitar solos, etc., and about six months after being fired, I was in the studio to begin the recording process of the album.

AU: How would you describe your sound in five words?

RG: Dynamic, Assertive, Empowering, Bombastic, Distinctive

AU: Top five bands that your band sounds like that fans of them may enjoy.

RG: Dissection, Immortal, Skeletonwitch, Death, Behemoth.

AU: Malice Divine just released its debut self-titled album, on Feb 19th, how do think it will be received by fans?

RG: I am confident that it will be received very well by the fans. It is a very strong debut album.



AU: Any stand-out tracks you are personally stoked on?

RG: I wouldn't say that there are any particular songs that I'm

especially stoked on because every song is quite strong. Personally, I'm stoked on the entire record, so I'll let the fans decide what the stand-out tracks are!

AU: What kind of listening experience are you trying to give fans with this album, its singles?

RG: The kind of listening experience that I am

aiming to give fans is an experience of empowerment and motivation. I want listeners to walk away feeling like they can overcome whatever obstacles they face and be inspired to pursue whatever it is that they want out of life.

AU: As a one-man project writing everything, how did you find the recording process, working alone on everything, and deciding the outcome of the album?

RG: Well, first of all, I didn't work alone on everything because I hired a session drummer and the album was tracked by an audio engineer. However, the composition process was definitely a one-man effort, as I wrote the entire album by myself. The recording process was definitely quite draining, but still very fun as well. It was definitely exciting to see these songs that I've worked so on come to life.

AU: We understand that you were on Sam Dunn's Shredders of Metal, how was that experience? What did you find most challenging about being in that competition? Any advice for future competitors?

RG: The *Shredders of Metal* experience was really fun, but also quite intimidating and stressful. What I found to be the most challenging aspect of that competition was definitely having to compose lead guitar lines and have them ready to be performed in only just two weeks. In my opinion, two weeks isn't enough time, at least for me. I like to refine my ideas over time and two weeks isn't really enough time for that, especially when you have to also get your parts down tight enough for a competition on a big YouTube channel.

AU: Are there plans to take the one-man project to live stages with a full band after the Covid pandemic?

RG: Yes, there are plans for Malice Divine to perform live after the Covid pandemic! Hopefully, that can happen sooner rather than later.

AU: How have you been surviving the Apocalypse? Any survival tips to share?

TORONTO TRASH

RG: Though the apocalypse I've been surviving by being as productive as I by working on music, reading a lot, finishing the last few courses of my university degree (in music), exercising, etc. My tips would be to remain as productive as you can and to take care of yourself.

AU: What do you miss most about live music?

EG: I miss the sense of community that is a part of live music the most.

AU: How would you sum up this past 2020? And how do you think 2021 will turn out?

RG: 2020 was an extremely productive year for me. I spent the entirety of it working really hard on the debut Malice Divine album, and for that reason, as well as some other more personal reasons, it was a really good year, despite all of which was going on in the world. I think 2021 will turn out to be at least as productive as 2020, if not more so!

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? Anything else to promote?

RG: There is merch available for purchase (T-shirts and hoodies) and physical CDs as well! There are also playthrough and lyric videos on the Malice Divine YouTube channel. You can also purchase a digital copy on Bandcamp at malicedivine.bandcamp.com.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

RG: I just wanted to say thank you to everyone who checked out my music and supported me in any way! It's very much appreciated.

facebook.com/malicedivineband
instagram.com/malicedivineofficial
malicedivine.bandcamp.com/

PHOTO CREDIT: Deborah Lawrence



ABSOLUTE ASIA

Round Eye

The sexiest, hairiest and loudest band in China

By Ryan Dyer

Round Eye are a band of expats living in Shanghai who have made a respected, though somewhat controversial name for themselves since their formation in 2012. The experimental punk outfit have recently released *Culture Shock Treatment*, an album which, true to their nature,



examines life in Middle Kingdom and beyond with songs like "Red Crimes", "The Foreigner" and the eponymous, catatonic title track. I caught up with bassist Livio in the midst of their series of shows around China during the winter of 2020 where they ventured to places they have never been before such as Chongqing, Chengdu, Qingdao and Tianjin to discuss the album and the general awkwardness of being a long-term punk band of foreigners in China.

Absolute Underground: Being a band of expats who live in Shanghai, what obstacles have you had to overcome? Furthermore, what has shocked you recently?

Round Eye: To be honest, things around here rarely surprise us anymore. We are not surprised when venues are shut down and foreigners have to pay top dollar to be able to legally perform.

The biggest obstacle - and frustration - is never being able to be taken seriously or as a legitimate hard-working band. Instead - audience, promoters, Chinese media, Chinese labels - keep seeing us as a novelty, as a rowdy bunch of foreigners playing for fun just to kill time. We are shocked when we are treated like a regular band instead.

AU: The "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" video is of a guy meeting his girlfriend's Chinese family. The lyrics deal with the clash of ideals a foreigner may have with their partner or family. I felt when watching it that although it feels like an isolated struggle, many expats go through the exact same situation and frustrations. Would you care to elaborate?

RE: The lyrics for that song were partly inspired by true events happened to our sax player Mac (starring in the video) who was left by his Chinese fiancée few weeks before their wedding.

Although the reasons behind that decision might have been more complex, not being accepted by her family because he's a foreigner, certainly played a huge role in the split up.

AU: Music is a great vessel to express cultural differences. Have you experienced any backlash for any songs or videos (which for all intents and purposes, show a true perspective on things, like "Suntan")?

RE: I must say that the few times that someone criticized our name, videos, music, lyrics for being insensitive or even racist, well, that was always a foreigner. Our Chinese friends love "Suntan" because they know that the stereotype is 100% true, exactly as every Chinese person understands or even shares the real-life situation portrayed in "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner". To be clear though, we never wanted to make fun of it, but just show a cliché in a funny way. Plus, both videos star Chinese actors and directors who had a blast filming them.

AU: In Beijing there is a band called Hell City, who have songs like "Chaos PRC". I have wondered if they were pestered by government officials, or perhaps not, since they are an underground punk band so perhaps the officials aren't aware of them. Is this a dangerous line to tread for a band?

RE: You have to be aware of the risks. Nobody is ever 'safe', no matter how insignificant you are for any party official. Our tour with The Boys got entirely cancelled in 2014 because someone in the Ministry of Culture didn't like the flyer for that tour which portrayed a girl wearing a national scout league uniform who was menstruating the names of the bands and the tour dates out of her vagina. A beautiful artwork, by the way.

AU: Being in China gives us the opportunity to see what's going on in the US from an outside perspective. Do you think if the band lived in the US, you would be the same band covering some of the same topics?

RE: Yes, absolutely. In the US we would probably be even more critical of the American politics and social inequalities.

AU: Which Chinese tours for international bands have you arranged yourself? Furthermore, how difficult is it to arrange these/help to get visas for the bands?

RE: Getting bands to tour in China is very hard. Starting from the basic paperwork to transportation and accommodation costs, the difficulty is multiplied ten fold. That's why it's so important bringing in bands that understand the struggle and are eager to ease the process before and during the tour. Also, the fewer the band members, the better it is for everyone; bringing from home roadies, supporting bands, sound engineers is always a bad idea. Bands we brought to China: MOTO, Steve Mackay (Stooges), Mr. Clit and the Pink Cigarettes, Daikaiju, Paul Collins, The Boys, The Fleshtones, The Dickies, MDC, Elected Officials, Mike Watt and The Missingmen, Deniz Tek, The Descendents, Twink, No Fraud.

AU: You have had a few US tours previously. How were the shows different from the Chinese ones?

RE: It doesn't really matter where you play. In China as in the US, if you are playing in a small town where people are hungry for new stuff, especially for touring bands, then you'll have a great time. 100%.

AU: How did your recent Chinese tour go in the midst of this pandemic?

RE: We don't really call it a 'tour'. We have been playing mostly during the weekend for a couple of days consecutively, then we are back home to our daily jobs. Nevertheless we are truly blessed for being able to do so.

AU: Could you remark on Torturing Nurse and his Noishanghai shows? I feel like these type of experimental shows are more friendly towards foreign artists...

RE: We know Torturing Nurse, we played together several times and he also features in "Culture Shock Treatment", the first song of our new album. However I personally don't know much about noise music and I can't consider myself a Torturing Nurse fan. That's more Chachy's thing.

He's great and I surely appreciate the fact that he's doing his thing since the late 90's in China, which takes huge balls as a Chinese man.

AU: What advice can you give foreigners in China who want to start a band? Do your visas all have to be in perfect alignment? Where can you practise and how can you book your first show?

RE: Make friends with Chinese bands and put up a show together. That's the only way you can play without any trouble. Go to jam session nights and finally find a live music venue that let new bands play (and suck). If you do it long enough, you'll eventually get better and you will be able to play bigger stages or even out of town.

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POWDER SEEKERS



Micah McGinnity

Micah McGinnity

Interview by Ira Hunter & Dave Best

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to you and what are you best known for?

MM: My name is Micah McGinnity... I would guess I'm probably best known for my pro snowboard career '97 - '07.

AU: Where did you grow up?

MM: I grew up in the burbs of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

AU: How long have you been snowboarding?

MM: 30 years. The first time I stepped on a snowboard was winter of '91. On a Burton Micro-Craig Kelly. Took it off our skate ramps the first day!

AU: Where is your favourite place to ride?

MM: My favorite place to ride is in Utah at Brighton or Snowbird on a pow day.

AU: After how many days did you realize snowboarding was naturally built into your psyche?

Him and guys like Jeff Brushie, Noah Salasnek, and Terje Haakenson.

AU: What do you consider your local mountain?

MM: Well I would say my stomping grounds is Trollhaugen at the border of Minnesota and Wisconsin. But now that I live in Oceanside, CA, I would say Mammoth.



AU: Now you live in San Diego are you feeling separated from the mountains or where is the nearest mountain that you can ride?

MM: The nearest mountain is Mammoth but there are smaller spots like Big Bear and Snow Summit that are always fun to hit that are the closest just a couple hours.

Being separated from the mountains was a change at first - but after the snowboarding career I was stoking to get more time to surf and travel to spots with amazing waves and warm

weather.

AU: Do you also skateboard or surf as well?

MM: I love to do both, but my effort and time is spent in the ocean. I just want to surf.

AU: Describe the sensation of snowboarding verbally if at all possible.

MM: Whoa... not sure this will satisfy... but - Style and expression. It's so individual.

Nothing gets me more frothing than seeing tricks done smooth and just making the difficult look so easy, like effortless. We know how gnarly most of the stuff is that is going down now and riders that make it look easy, usually have such a good style.

AU: Do you ever snowboard stoned or drunk or are you more about the natural high?

MM: Natural high bro. I don't know why... I just never mixed the two. It's hard enough trying to land in pow!

AU: What's better, a fresh powder run or an orgasm?

MM: Orgasm.

AU: What first got you stoked on snowboarding?

MM: Skateboarding first, when I saw snowboarding in the mags, it was like we could still "skate" through the Minnesota winters! At first, it was to get us by til we could skate again. We actually set up our 4ft skate ramps as jumps...and to flat of course!

AU: Who did you look up to that influenced you on your journey?

MM: Craig Kelly, Jeff Brushie, Jamie Lynn, Roan Rogers, Daniel Frank, Chad Otterstrom, Devun Walsh, JP Walker, Mikey Leblanc, Seth Huot, Bjorn Leine- all the guys in Kingpin and Mack Dawg Production movies... among others.

AU: Do you have any kids? Do they ride as well?

MM: My wife Emily and I have a 2 year old boy Merrick and just had our daughter Lyndie. One of each. It's hectic, bro.

I strapped Merrick into a kids board and also got him standing on a skateboard. We watch shred vids and surf vids when it's flat.

AU: How tall was the biggest cliff you ever jumped off?

MM: Maybe 35ft

AU: Do you prefer a deep powder day or a perfect snowboard park day?

MM: POW DAY!

AU: How do you break through the fear of launching big fat airs?

MM: Work your way up. Start small, have control before you step it up.

AU: Are you a 360 guy or a backflip guy?

MM: 360 guy....if I go upside down it's to cork it out a lil bit.

AU: How does one become a professional snowboarder and get sponsors. what are some sponsors you've had if any?

MM: These days... I can't imagine how hard it must be to make a living snowboarding. I would say ride every day and push yourself with your friends. That's



where it starts.

I was very thankful to have ridden for some pretty radical teams like M3 Snowboards, Volcom, Spy, Osiris, Cal Surf Skateshop, Park City Resorts, Technine, Academy Snowboards, Celsius, DC.

AU: How do people find you online?

MM: Might be some VHS out there uploaded... ha. Nah, probably Google or videos that were uploaded from DVD. Some Kingpin Production



films and Mack Dawg films.

AU: Final words of wisdom for Canadiens up here in our igloos?

MM: Cherish every moment you get out there...on the powdays and just the cruisers.

Always have fun.

PHOTO CREDITS: Chad Otterstrom and Andy Wright

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Dean Murdoch

Interview by Locker

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you all about?

DM: I'm Dean Murdoch, some call me The Governor of Giviner, or The Deaner. I like to rock and like everything from hard rock to soft metal like gold.

AU: What's new in your world these days?

DM: Been rocking out in my shed a lot, got some new polish for the Warlock Bass and it's looking great.

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day this year?

DM: I'm planning to take a lady out for dinner at a vending machine, because it's easy to social distance. I can just toss her the chips and drink across the hallway.

AU: Any advice for people trying to date in the Covid era?

DM: You gotta mix shit up like have a first date where you sneak into an empty ballpark and use a bullhorn to ask each other ice breaker questions from 60 feet away. Shit like that.

AU: Any Covid dating Do's and Don'ts?

in the 1980s, which makes him even more of a fuckin' badass.

AU: Anything else you want to promote or pump up?

DM: Honestly mental health is a serious fuckin' problem right now, the pandemic is making life super hard for a lot of people. So, if you feel like you're not at the top of your game, don't be afraid to reach out for help.

AU: Have you ever accidentally rubbed a dudes kneecap at a party drunk one night?

DM: I've kissed a

DM: Try and clean the old condoms off the floor before you invite anybody over. At the very least get into the bedroom first so you can kick them under the bed.

AU: What were your initial thoughts when Rob Halford came out of the closet on MTV?

DM: I mean, "Hell Bent for Leather," "Jawbreaker," "Ram it Down," if you were paying attention to his lyrics, it was pretty obvious. The thing is, it was super dangerous being gay and going cruisin'

dude who I thought was a chick when they were DJ-ing. I was like, "Oh fuck this chick's face is really stubbly," and then I was like, "Oh maybe this isn't a chick!" Had a pretty good laugh about that one after!

AU: What does it currently say on your Tinder profile?

DM: Hi, my name is Dean, Bass Player by day, wild man by night. You've probably already noticed that I have an incredibly powerful moustache. I'm not afraid to get sand on my leather jacket if you're not afraid to get your hair messed up when I blow your mind.

AU: Final words of relationship advice for our

Lockdown Love

readers?

DM: Ladies love confidence and a sense of humour so go fuckin' ballistic on your clothes when you go out with a lady. Wear your 'Gimme head til I'm Dead' shirt, wear a full on denim suit with a bolo tie with a dead moth encased in amber, just fuckin' go for it, nobody wants to hang out with a dude in sweat pants and a Nike T-shirt.

Twitter: @dean_murdoch

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Maudiir

Interview submitted by Jon Asher

Absolute Underground: For Absolute Underground readers, please tell us how Maudiir came to be?

F: I started the project in November 2018, wanting to try something new, alone. I was getting tired of working with other musicians, as that can sometimes be grueling; waiting on other people to do their parts, having to replace band members, hiring people... So I decided to take the matter in my own hands. I bought myself a

bass guitar, got a mic, and here I am now with my second EP.

AU: How would you describe your sound in five words?

F: Let's try "Progressive blackened thrash metal"

AU: Top five bands that your band sounds like that fans of them may enjoy.



F: Skeletonwitch, Voivod, Ihsahn, Enslaved, Darkthrone

AU: Maudiir just released the new EP, "La Part Du Diable" on Feb 19th, how do you think it will be received by fans compared to your previous EP, "Le Temps Peste"?

F: I hope people find it interesting, a sort of

continuation of "Le Temps Peste," with new progressive elements. I try to renew myself and not repeat the same formula.

AU: What kind of listening experience is trying to give fans with this new record, its singles?

F: "La Part du Diable" is intense dark music with lyrics reflecting on society, politics and religion.

AU: As a one-man project writing everything compared to your other band Trinity Blast, how did you find the recording process, working alone on everything, and deciding the outcome of the EP?

F: It's very liberating to be able to depend only on myself. At the same time, mixing the project always seems to bring me on the edge of losing my mind (or maybe that would be my girlfriend? haha!)

AU: Any more music in the pans following this EP?

F: At the time of writing this (January 2021), I have not yet started work on new music, but I'm planning to do so in a month or two. I'm promoting "La Part du Diable" and that takes time. Afterward, I'm going to start thinking of where I want to go next musically with Maudiir.

AU: We understand you're based in the metal hotbed of Montreal? What's your favourite thing about the metal scene in that city?

F: There are lots of different local bands with their own style and personality. Montreal has really opened up to the world with quality bands. It's also a great place to see shows. A lot of big bands as well as the more obscure ones come to Montreal. There is also a great black metal festival that I quite enjoy; La Messe des Morts. But let's not forget the Metal Noir Québécois scene that is pretty much based around Quebec City. I really like a lot of those bands (Monarque, Forteresse, etc) and this scene is starting to make its mark internationally.

AU: Are there plans to take the one-man project to live stages with a full band after the

MONTREAL MASSACRE

Covid pandemic?

F: No plans as of now. I'm still enjoying working alone on this. Let there be a build-up for that project that leads to playing live one day to an interesting audience.

AU: What do you miss most about live music?

F: I miss the big summer festivals in Montreal. There is such a nice ambiance in those festivals.

AU: How have you been surviving the Apocalypse? Any survival tips to share?

F: Drink beer, but not too much! Working on music or anything creative definitely helps me.

AU: How would you sum up this past 2020? And how do you think 2021 will turn out?

F: I'm sure most people would say 2020 has been shit, and for many people it really has been terrible; jobs lost, businesses closing... I have been lucky enough to keep my job and be able to make a second Maudiir EP. I'm afraid we're not out of the woods yet for 2021. I do think summer will be easier though.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? Anything else to promote?

F: I do have other bands and past projects that you could look into if you feel like it; Trinity Blast, Made in Iron (Iron Maiden tribute band), Tears for the Dead Gods, Deeply Confused.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

F: "Le Temps Peste" and "La Part du Diable" are available as a "pay if you want or download for free" format on Bandcamp. Just spread the word, share with your friends if you like the music.

facebook.com/Maudiir-100174698189554/

maudiir.bandcamp.com/

open.spotify.com/artist/7AJ76tIs73yAkgKiqc3kwP

youtube.com/channel/UCtvAocVOE78_aclaehlqOUw



Nightmares and Torment

Thrash Metal by Victoria's Deranged, 1988-89

Scott Murdoch - vocals, Ross Butterfield - guitar, Jason Harvey - guitar, Dave Bentley - bass, Tim Sweeting - drums.

Interview by Johnny Ogle

Absolute Underground: How long did the band last?

Jason: Unless I'm totally off, due to time and memory ... I met Tim and Ross in the spring of '87. Kelly did vocals that summer and Scott replaced him a few months later. Dave joined after the first demo was recorded. We disbanded in the summer of '89. That much I'm sure of.

Tim: 1986-87 is when we started and I don't believe it went on past 1990-91. The reason for the breakup is still a mystery to me.



AU: What was the scene like for you guys around that time? What bands were you gigging with, etc.? Are you still in touch with some of these bands?

Jason: The scene in Victoria in 1987-89 had lots of bands, and some pretty big local names like Nomeansno and the Dayglo Abortions. There were a number of hardcore/punk bands and a few metal bands as well. A lot of the crowd I hung around with played something ... one style or another. It'd be hard to try and name them all, but

we played with Armoros, Mission of Christ and Atrosity, to name a few.

AU: You recorded two demos, which sound very different – at least in terms of production. What can you tell us about the recordings?

Dave: I don't know much about the first demo, except that I love the song "Kill Murder Maim!"

Place of Torment was recorded with more tracks, locally in Victoria, BC, and most of the tracks were recorded in one or two takes, which made it sound killer! Deranged was well rehearsed, and had great new songs lined up for *Place of Torment*, so we slayed the recording process!

Jason: The first one was older material that Ross and Tim put together just before I joined. I had little to do with the material other than some riff tweaking and some arrangement, but I enjoyed playing it. Scott had just joined at the time and hadn't really found his voice. His initial vocal style was much more in line with the Metallica covers his old band played. Also, the recording was done on an 8 track, and honestly we just hadn't yet hit our stride.

By the time we recorded the second demo, all members had contributed. We all had very different writing styles and influences, so it made for a more diverse sound. We also focused on getting it right, as we wanted to put out a more solid demo the second time around. Our styles meshed, and Scott really pulled off some incredible vocal work (as he did when we played live). The studio was better by the time we recorded *Torment* too, so the combination of factors all made for a very different sound than the first.

AU: You were active in what some people would call the heyday period of tape trading – how far did your demo reach in the world? Were you actively sending demos out, or did that happen organically?

Dave: Metal fans and magazines from all over the world contacted Deranged to get our tapes. We were very active sending them out; Tim still has a bunch of the mail we received. I remember reading letters from Japan, Chile, France, Australia, the U.S. and many other countries. Metal is loved worldwide, and it was a pleasure to share our music with people around the planet.

Ross: Tape trading was big and we sent out tons of demos. We received mail from all over the world: Russia, Poland, Germany, South America, and Asia.

Jason: Most of the music I listened to for the years before and during my Deranged days was a result of tape trading. That's all I really knew. We sent tapes everywhere. Lots to North America of course, but also to Western Europe, Scandinavia, Poland, Italy, Australia, Brazil, Chile – all the metal hotspots at the time.

AU: Were you guys aware of (or influenced by) what was going on in the European scene at the time? Or were your influences more Canadian?

Dave: Tough question, as there were so many influences that each Deranged member had individually. But Macabre, the extreme metal band from Chicago, was a huge influence for Deranged. Fast riffs, brutal lyrics, heavy sound. We would warm up by playing their song "Serial Killer."



Ross: We were definitely influenced by the NWOBHM and subsequent waves as well. I really liked thrash metal and death metal.

Tim: I wasn't aware of too much European metal until about 1992. For me, it was mostly Canadian and American metal.

Jason: I liked music from around the globe. Mostly American I guess, but lots of European and South American, and some bands from Australia and lots from Canada too. What I liked and listened to obviously influenced me as well.

AU: Did you guys get any major label interest?

Tim: We did not get any major label interest but we certainly got a shit-ton of smaller-label interest. Perhaps I waited too long to talk to some of them but I also thought, "we should put out another demo to crush *Place of Torment*." We were young and I thought perhaps the bigger labels were waiting to see what we could do.

Dave: It depends on how you measure success. Metal fans loved the music, and we enjoyed playing it, but major labels did not bite. It was a slower process back then to contact/hear back from record labels – all done by snail mail. In the late 80s, the most successful metal bands were not as heavy as Deranged, and record labels tended to focus on them instead.

Jason: There was no money and almost no interest by record labels that I can remember. But for fans of the style, we were well received. We were serious about what we were doing, and at 17, I wouldn't have wanted it any other way. The band was, for me, absolutely the right thing for the time.

Ross: We sent demos out to the labels, but didn't get much response.

AU: I think the recordings still sound fresh. What do you think?

Jason: I still love listening to *Place of Torment*. I think it sounds as good today as some other bands from the era that I still listen to.

Tim: Isn't it obvious that these recordings have stood the test of time because of your question? It's unbelievable to me that people still want to hear our music.

Ross: I think the material still sounds great.

Dave: Deranged will always stand the test of time – the band had solid musicianship that showed in the recordings.

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- J. LEBLANC



The Shit Talkers

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

Liz Mantle: Talking to the Liz Mantle a.k.a. the dismantler. I would guess I am most infamous for being brutally honest with no apologies. See it, call it, no edit, would be my most wicked trait.

AU: Introduce us to the Shit Talkers, for those of us that aren't acquainted with you yet.

LM: The Shit Talkers have made our way through the rock'n roll dog pile, being given the honour as a new band to play with some punk rock heavies like SNFU, DOA, Agent Orange Dayglo Abortions and CJ Ramone.

We thrive on humour, wit and wordplay. Our songs can be pretty weird, featuring illogical events or absurd situations or in other words, being just plain silly. Lyrical fun with catchy riffage and stellar beats gets our jam jelling. No baby

baby baby or woaaaa oh oh oh like a thousand other songs. Our focus is on making art, being original and to poke fun at everyday life

AU: What have you been up to since we last talked?

LM: We have been writing and touring. 2019 was an epic year for us. First off we were invited to play Rebellion Festival in Blackpool, England. It was a big undertaking for us to get across the pond, so once there we set off on a small EU tour. We played a few shows and festivals, in Spain, France and Germany! Met and hung with some awesome folks, saw amazing places and cannot wait to go back!!

AU: Tell us about the new album, what can we expect to hear? Does it explore any particular themes or topics?

LM: Wit and wordplay is definitely the cornerstone of our band. This new album is very exploratory in styles and content. A lot of our previous material was based on current events or antics we observed within our rock n roll family circle, This recording has a big influence from our tour with one song in Spanish, and some that were written while together on that trip.

We laugh at ourselves in songs like "Boob Sox." Or taking a poke at some current affairs like consensual sex of the "me too" movement in "Makin Bay Beez" or commenting on the insidious power of the internet in "Uncle Google."

AU: Tell us about the experience of recording an album during a pandemic...how did it affect your process?

LM: The pandemic had a huge influence on this recording. To start with, our bassist Michelle was unable to participate. We were determined to get a new record out, come hell or high water. An awesome friend "Skootches" and talented player filled in which brought a new and different flavour to the rhythm section.

Our producer and engineer Steve Loree came and set up an incredible portable recording studio at our home in Princeton! Tequila is a terrific disinfectant. It was a super spreader event but for crabs. What?... turn it up Steve...huh.

AU: Is "Moist Talking" a Trudeau reference?

What would you like to speak moistly to him?

LM: HA HA oh what would I moistly say to our Prime Minister ha ha ha ...you know we had a thing called "close talking" already in our joke repertoire! Brooke and Michelle would both close in on you and get really close to talk after a couple of glasses of wine. My daughter Kim Stephenson stepped up to the mic in a prerecording jam session with some electric moist talking vocals and ta da! Moist talking came to be. To Trudeau, I would say stop funding pipelines, fracking and big oil very moistly, spraying it not just saying it!

AU: What's next for the Shit Talkers? Will you be doing any music videos, more recording, etc? Any live performances on the horizon?

LM: Of course 2020 was a blow out with no shows. Our last show was opening for the Real McKenzies at the Rickshaw March 2020. Unfortunately, with so many places closing it will be a whole new venue landscape when it returns! We are patiently waiting to return to our fave spots in Canada and the EU when travel is open.

We will have a podcast show from the Rickshaw theatre in conjunction with the arrival of our vinyl pressing in June. Recording and videos in lieu of touring is what we are focusing on to keep the momentum up.

AU: What formats will the album be available in and where will they be available?

LM: Feb 2nd, this album will be on CDs and 20 streaming platforms including iTunes, Apple, Tik Tok, Spotify, Deezer, and on and on. Physical copies will be in the form of vinyl which will be out in June getting copies in independent record stores in BC and will be available through our website or contact through FB or email.

AU: Since this is the Valentine's issue, do you have any tips or advice for dating during Covid?

LM: Well hmmm kinda strange times for that, eh?

Lockdown Love

Send lots of flowers poems and chocolates to woo your object of affection from a distance, sing a song for them outside their window, you stalker you! If that gets it started then maybe, saran wrapped love making or an ancient buck board between you bahah...when the passion hits ya ... get tested...stay isolated then...practice makin bay beez with your new found lover!

AU: What does it say on the band members' Tinder profiles?

LM: We are on the swingers list as we come as a whole package for orgies. Lots of spank and fire with this gang with open minds prevailing!

AU: Everyone knows that being in a band is essentially dating your bandmates - how do you and your fellow Shit Talkers keep things fun and spicy?

LM: We all share a similar style of humour so a ton of laughing. We use our time together to break from everyday life, laugh, create and travel a natural recipe for happiness!

AU: What should we know about the Shit Talkers that we don't already?

LM: We operate as totally independent and do all our own promotions and booking.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

LM: We have a serious side too, with a desire to change some shitty realities in the world if we could through art and song. We bring to our craft those goals of first having fun but also if need be making a statement and shining a light on worthy issues. Happy Valentines hugs and moist kisses to all!

theshittalkers.com

Paperbacks From Hell

By Vince D'Amato

Two years ago, author Grady Hendrix had *Paperbacks from Hell*, his splashy retrospective

of the history of horror paperbacks published. For those who are not familiar with the name Grady Hendrix, horror fans will likely come across his name at some point, or have already without even know it.

Recently, his work can be seen on Netflix as he's the co-writer of the documentary on the history of Kung-Fu films *Iron Fists & Kung Fu Kicks* and co-wrote the Ted Geoghegan horror film *Mohawk* in 2017. His new film, *Satanic Panic*, was shown at the Cannes Market last year and can be seen on Google Play. But Hendrix's claim to fame has to be his horror novels, which have all been

published in highly imaginative and creative hard-copy formats – *Horrorstor*, about employees trapped overnight in an IKEA-type of huge-box retail store, was published entirely in the style of an IKEA catalogue,

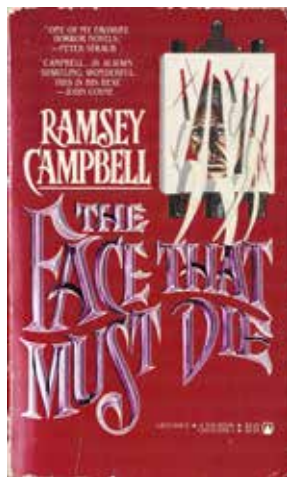
My Best Friend's Exorcism was published as a high-school yearbook (hardcover) and then as a retro- VHS-tape rental cover (in trade paperback). The *We Sold Our Souls* trade paperback looks like an issue of *Rolling Stone*, and his first novel, *Satan Loves You*, was published as a paperback with a cover that's clearly an homage to the horror paperback covers of the 1980s – which were the inspiration of *Paperbacks from Hell*.

Paperbacks from Hell didn't rock the literary world when it was released, but I think that it helped to create an uptick in the interest in old horror paperbacks (and specifically their lurid, sexy covers) in collectors that is getting comparable to

the collections of VHS. For me, personally, I am wont to delve even deeper and usually after reading one of these old-school horror paperbacks I find myself doing some research on the authors (are they still around?) or the books themselves (was this a hit when it came out?) Over several novels I've found

some very interesting artifacts crammed in the back of the horror shelf of the local used bookstore that happen to be filled with strange histories if you're willing to dig a little on the internet. But one of my favourite finds was Bari Wood's 1981 novel *The Tribe*, which is also the only book that garnered an entire page of attention in Grady Hendrix's retrospective book. *The Tribe* is supremely well-written, comparable to

the works of Peter Straub (*Ghost Story*, *The Talisman*) or Robert R. McCamman (*Stinger*, *Swan Song*, *Blue World*), and it motivated me to go and seek out her other works, which include *The Killing Gift*, *Amy Girl*, and *Doll's Eyes*. While Bari Woods seems not to have written anything since the 1990s, and she wasn't overly prolific during her career, she still lays some claim to fame in the horror genre because two of her novels were adapted for the big screen by two major film directors. 1999 saw Neil Jordan (*Interview with a Vampire*, *The Crying Game*, *The Company of Wolves*) adapt



Absolute Horror

her novel *Doll's Eyes* into a fully disturbing dream-reality serial killer film starring Annette Bening and Robert Downey, Jr. Definitely not a box-office hit, the movie is never really talked about, which is actually a bit of a shame as the highly stylized horror hearkens back to Jordan's lush arthouse (and also underrated) werewolf/Red Riding film *The Company of Wolves*. But speaking of film directors who bring their own bent to the horror genre, it was none other than body-horror auteur David Cronenberg who first brought Bari Wood's work into the realm of horror cinema – when he adapted her book *Twins* into

Dead Ringers in 1988. Cronenberg's quietly twisted, psychologically disturbing horror film (about a pair of identical twin gynecologists who wind up going down a path of narcissism, hubris, agoraphobia, and obsession, that turns down the road to self-destruction) is one

of his seminal films of the 1980s that doesn't get as much attention as it should when discussing top horror movies of the 1980s. On an amusing side-note, one of my wife's friends from her high school days became so obsessed with *Dead Ringers* after renting it on a whim that she went back to re-rent it several times before finally just stealing it from the video store. And that's the power of horror stories like this, when told by master storytellers, they just worm their way into your head to burrow into your brain and nest there...

Like some of Cronenberg's other works – I must have watched *The Dead Zone* on Superchannel at least four times when I was a kid in the mid-eighties.

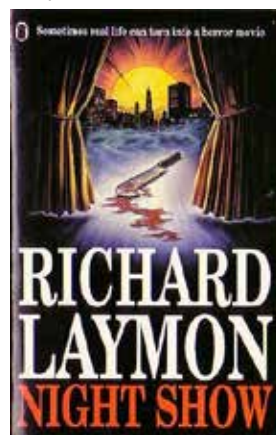
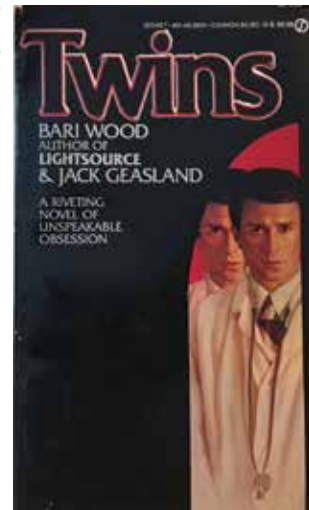
Unlike Bari Wood or Peter Straub, who found some decent success in the hardcover angle of the publishing world and landed a couple of film studios willing to adapt their works to the silver screen, there were plenty of horror-lit authors who carved out a living in the direct-to-paperback universe without ever having their stories adapted to any other medium, and in a lot of cases, didn't often have their works even reprinted. The great Joe R. Lansdale, author of *The Nightrunners* and *Writers of the Purple Rage*

also sat in this category for the first part of his career, until indie filmmakers Don Coscarelli and Jim Mickle took and interest in his work, which eventually led up to some mainstream attention with his *Hap & Leonard* series. But I actually wanted to explore a little bit of the darker side of that coin, where career horror authors of the 80s and 90s wound up on journeys that led them to take jobs outside of the horror-lit industry. The wildly prolific Ramsey Campbell, who wrote the cult classics *The Doll Who Ate His Mother*, *The Face that Must Die*, *Hungry Moon*, and dozens of others, was forced to take a retail job at a corporate-chain bookstore to make ends meet late in his writing career – and the man had published dozens of works over three decades. Charles L. Grant passed away quietly in 2006 after authoring dozens of

books for the TOR publishing company, including an ongoing series of supernatural horror in his *Oxrun* series. Grant ended up writing novelizations of the then-epicly-popular *X-Files* television show in the mid-to-late-90s. Fellow TOR Horror author Graham Masterton, whose claim to fame was one of his first novels, *The Manitou*, a twisted pulp-horror novel that was turned into a totally bonkers cult film, also at times authored works like *Master of Lies* that were so horrifically brutal even the hardest-nosed horror fans might have trouble getting through his gut-punching prose. Still working, Masterton now writes the more-marketable series-

thrillers for a huge publishing company; a genre that some fans consider to be a "sell-out" genre (Stephen King included, upon the self-reflection of having written his own serial-thriller *Mr. Mercedes* series). My favourite of all the career horror authors, the vividly visual American horror writer Richard Laymon, was one who never saw any cinematic adaptations for any of his fifty-plus horror-lit works (note: I also wrote about Richard Laymon specifically for the summer 2019 issue of *Absolute Underground*); sadly, Laymon died of a heart attack on Valentine's Day in 2001, at the peak of his literary popularity; who knows where his talents may have taken him had he been able to continue on for the past two decades. His books are still printed in several languages throughout various European countries to this day.

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Resident audio engineer, Danny Deane

Stefano's Artfarm

Interview by Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are you talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?

Stefano: Not certain I can claim any famous notoriety but I suppose working with some great talent has its perks!

AU: What is on your musical resumes? What bands have you been involved with?

S: Myself, I've worked and toured with many bands in the past. Some more notable than

others. I was drum technician to acts in the early days of Nickleback, Finger 11 and Skid Row as well as stage manager to Alice Cooper. I've personally overseen scheduling and payroll to Metallica, Kim Mitchell, Taj Mahal and was offered the opportunity to perform as sit in drummer to Mötley Crüe, as well other label acts.

AU: Tell us about the genesis of Stefano's Artfarm. What was the idea behind creating it?

S: I simply saw a need and felt I could fill it with a community of like-minded individuals who could benefit from our service. I personally know the struggle of finding a spot to hone one's skills without the confinement and restrictions of certain hours or noise bylaws.

AU: Where is the Artfarm located?

S: Corner of Tillicum and Gorge - 2920 Tillicum Rd.

AU: What makes the space unique?

S: Having a place to rehearse, 24 hours a day is unheard of in most spots. This is where the Art Farm is different. Like I always say, "You can't schedule inspiration."

AU: What services do you offer?

S: Aside from a very well equipped state of the art recording facility manned by lead engineer Danny Deane and second Engineer Lucius Perreault, we also offer both monthly lockout rental rooms (set up the way you see fit and no breakdown) as well as a very affordable hourly room outfitted with a PA system, drum kit, mics and even a TV for streaming lyrics or karaoke.

AU: What is the mission statement of the Artfarm?

S: Situated in the heart of Victoria, Stefano's Artfarm offers 24 hour studio space for creative artists. Musicians, Bands, Photographers, Pod-Casters, Tattooers, Dancers, DJs and Performers of all kinds can have their own private, secure and flexible studio space to develop and share their skills and talents.

AU: Tell us about your latest endeavor and the creation of your recording studio.

S: As of Jan 1st, 2021 we opened our doors to the recording aspect of the Artfarm. This saw a marriage of gear and know how. Danny brings an extensive knowledge and professionalism to the fold as well as existing clients, and some new ones. Since that day we have been very busy recording some very talented bands and musicians and look forward to releasing this soon.

AU: What skills do you bring to the table to help people achieve their band's dreams and goals?

S: With vast recording experience we can offer anything the artist desires. Full production release or demo recordings and everything in between.

Depending on the experience of



the client we can help steer them in the right direction be it producing side or market. We are not a record label but happy to help in any way we can.

AU: Anything else exciting on the horizon or anything else you want to promote?

S: Lots in the works from multi-media and video services to live streaming performances right in our facilities. Also working toward some type of flash mob style videos encompassing 100s of local talent in a gang chorus type of setting to a predetermined song(s) for Youtube/website and other social media exposure.

Lastly we plan to start an annual release of Artfarm tenants as a promotional tool which will showcase both the bands and the studio in all their glory. Sort of a nod to 100.3 the Q's Rocktoria or Vancouver Fox seeds.

Artfarm.ca





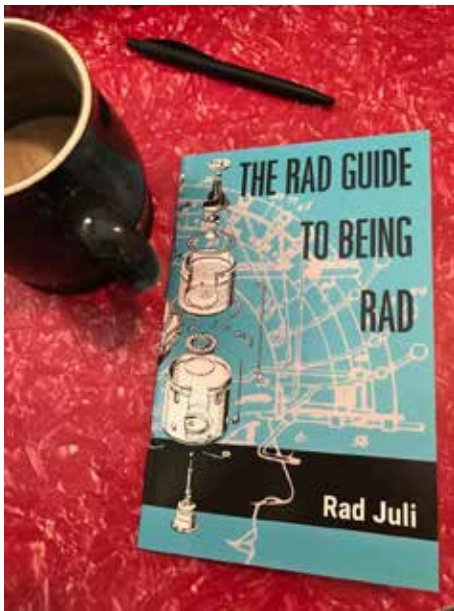
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Rad Juli

A Life Guide for the Age We Live In

Interview by Erik Lindholm

Absolute Underground: For those who don't know you, what do you do? A crash course.

RJ: Currently I play drums in Tremblers of Sevens, and David P Smith's Apeshit Army. I play with Slim Sandy doing old time rockabilly. I make leather wallets, bags, belts from reclaimed leather. And I also garden. So, lots of hats. When I'm not doing those things, I make food and listen to records and hang with my cat.

AU: Whoa.

RJ: It's a lot of things. But I am also good at organizing a calendar.

AU: We are gathered here today... to reflect that you are good at writing a book.

RJ: Which is funny, because I don't consider myself super eloquent!

AU: The book arrived September 2020, *The Rad Guide to Being Rad*, and there is a lot of depth to it, which would bely the page count. Very powerful and thought provoking, in a short page count. Can you speak about what the book is?

RJ: It's kind of a *Cole's Notes* of good and silly advice. I feel like I am in the middle of my life and had an opportunity to reflect back on the lessons I've learned. It is sort of a joking self help book. (It's more like, "Hey, if you wanted to get to know someone in 40 pages or less," this is it.) This is my life outlook.

This is why people call me "Rad." It's a big compliment to have that as your moniker. The things that make me rad are these tiny pieces of advice. And these little witty stories. Everything in the book came from something a lot deeper. There are these levels of it, being light and almost flippant. But everything in there is measured and

considered. I had help writing it. I was on tour with Carolyn and J, and Delaina, and Dan and a bunch of others on Cortes Island. And I would ask the group, "What does this feel like?" And people would jump in with their comments.

AU: A sense of community, in writing it.

RJ: Yes! I am not an island. The people you encounter in your life either affect you positively, or negatively, and you can take whatever lessons you want from that.

AU: In that sense, a bunch of these lessons you've gathered, you are now becoming an island, for other people to comprehend via your book, and your lessons which are hard fought and lovely...

RJ: Some were gifts and some were struggles, put it that way. I got to a part in my life, there are expectations at certain stages. By the time I'm X age, I should be doing Y, Z and W. And when those things don't happen and you measure yourself against the status quo, some people would get depressed. I've always chosen to step away from the status quo. I am definitely living up to my own expectations of what I should be doing, and achieving right now. I've constructed my life in such a way, that I can be really confident and say, "Yeah, I'm 42 and I play drums in a rock band and have two jobs, and a nice place to live and eat incredible food and go swimming whenever I want," you know?

It's not always been easy. A lot of steps along the way. Where you observe... this isn't for me. What's the way around this? Lots of moments in my life where I've run into a huge roadblock. The gift, or privilege, is being able to step back and go, "What am I learning from this? What can I take from this? What in this situation is going to make me better?"

AU: Your book must have been a catalyst for self reflection, for a lot of readers. The book has been out there for a while – have you gotten feedback, observations, from readers?

RJ: Yeah, a friend I sent it to a month ago just posted her favourite sections on Facebook, and a bunch of people hadn't heard about it or seen it. I don't have a publicist, or marketing for it. So more people heard about it. I sent out five this morning. And another five tomorrow. It's hilarious timing we are doing this interview! A whole bunch of people are stoked. A friend commented that she bought two and sent one to another friend. And the friend asked, "Do you know the author?" and she replied, "Yes! She is Rad Juli." And the person did not put those two things together: Rad Guide by Rad Juli. Both of them liked it and enjoyed it! Even a total stranger can relate!

AU: When you wrote it, was there a target audience for it? A type of person you wanted to reach?

RJ: A few of the chapters came from observing other people and how they navigate their life. And I thought, "If you had a manual to help you, maybe that would be good!" Some of it is that, and thinking on a grander scale, every once in a while you just need a piece of good advice – or someone to get you to look at things in a different way. So in many of the chapters I reference perspective, looking at it from a different angle. Just trying a different habit. We totally are

habitual creatures. But what if that's not working? Take a step back. Sometimes all you need is someone to say, "Take a step back – think about it". I think that would be the ultimate outcome of the book, everyone finds something in it to help them find new perspective.

To elaborate on perspective, some of the world's problems could be solved by seeing the situation from another person's perspective. It's important to consider. It doesn't work for everything, obviously, but it helps! Take a minute and think about the whole picture.

AU: If you seek to make people more rad, where do you think they might be now, status-wise?

RJ: I am definitely not looking down on people, not putting myself in a higher position. It's more of a positive reinforcement! If you're in a positive place, order the steak next time. Go dancing! Ya know? Take a good situation and improve on it. I think most people are in a pretty good place. If not, you're smart and compassionate and can reach out for help if you need it. don't be afraid. I heard a quote, "Do what you can, and when you can, do better," and that is my 2021 mantra. There are small ways you can contribute, that make big differences...like by lifting up a voice, amplifying a voice. We are so lucky that we have this platform with social media. It's fucking amazing!

AU: It's a cool tool. If we can be friendly on it. Don't be evil. It has allowed you to be "more you." You don't need to dilute yourself. Someone, somewhere, gets you.

RJ: Even in my business- I make a range of things. And other people make other things. When I first started, as a people-pleaser, I would say, "Of course I can do that!" And take things on. But I wore myself so thin. And it felt greedy, by holding

onto all these clients, when there are other people in the city who can do this shit way better than I do, so I found them, and built a network, and can recommend them. It's great. With the internet, I can network even more and amplify their business as well. Share the information and community. It's something I can do, we can do, to better the community.

AU: Is there further thoughts on the book you wanted to share? This your space.

RJ: Well, I just want people to read it, and be inspired to be rad in their own ways. It started as a vanity project and I tried really hard to tailor it to make it relatable.

AU: In this very moment, and time, what Black Sabbath song or album is speaking to you most loudly?

RJ: "Wheels of Confusion." Off of my favourite album *Volume 4*. Confusing times we are in. There is just a really beautiful melodic part in it. Even though it is chaos, there is still beauty in it. What about you, what song?

AU: "Electric Funeral" on *Paranoid*. I've heard the Pantera cover a million times, but the original production sounds so much more raw, less produced. It's trippy to think lomme made that tone 50 years ago with the wah... it doesn't make sense. 50 years ago.

Last words to people in backyards reading this magazine.

RJ: Take a deep breath. It's all good. We live in the most wealthy country, we have clean water out of the sink, you can buy anything from the grocery store. It's not so bad. Don't stress.

<https://www.radjuli.ca/shop/the-book>

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SHADOW CABINET WITH GRAYSON CALIGARI



cEvin Key

Interview by Grayson Caligari

Absolute Underground: How has the political climate affected your music?

Cevin Key: It definitely has been a time where some escapism was needed. Easily the most challenging period in memory, dealing with a sociopath president and his whole gang of questionables. Made me want to move to Japan. Then with Covid we couldn't go, so in some ways the studio became a solace, I told myself, "Ok I guess I'm going to really get inside a few ideas and see what happens." Collaborating with Edward, Chris, and the gang was exciting and it felt like we have found a nice place to be rather than think of the state of things.

AU: What is it like working with IAMX?

CK: Met Chris about six years ago and we linked right away with musical tastes and philosophical discussions, modular synthesis and animals. We didn't really have a plan to make music and it was nice that it came up on a really casual basis. I sent him the basis for "Anger is an Acid," and he surprised me with it about a year later. The other song I did with him, "Dark Trail," we collaborated on the musical more surreal manner, walking and

singing into iPhones and playing with modular synths. Ultimately it's super fun to collaborate and hear the results in this case, where they blew my mind, especially with "Anger." I really wasn't expecting to hear the song go to such a great

spot. I'm glad it comes between friends as well, as I don't think there is a better way to create.

AU: Did you use any unorthodox sound sources such as found objects on this new album, and if so, how?

CK: Not so much about found sound. Like say the morning theme played in North Korea, or a sample that I had of Soriah for a few

years. But moreso the exploration of modular and synthesis. over time building ideas that had a unique appeal to them from some sort of happy accident. That is usually what attracts me to synthesizers. Their ability to channel energies into sound waves is very appealing.

AU: What is your best memory from the time recording this new work?

CK: It's always in the collaboration with friends. A idea can grow and go into places that you can react to and so it becomes a musical language. I felt a connection to each of the tracks. One of them I dreamt about, and when I awoke I thought, "Ok I'll work on that one today." Went to find it and it was in a folder from seven years earlier. So sometimes melodies are thoughts that can come back in your senses. After a while some parts of music because so organic and tangible that it takes on its own life and I often don't see

them as pieces I created. It's the best part.

AU: What are you listening to these days?

CK: I have been listening to alot of YMO, which has always been one of my favourite bands. Lately there seems to have been a lot of stuff released on YouTube. Live performances of various bands. I've found that interesting. Yeah but I really have to say YMO YMO YMO!

AU: Tell me about your favourite synth?

CK: I think I'm looking still for my favourite synth. It hasn't appeared yet. I do absolutely love the OP1. I think the design of it is absolutely amazing, especially for such a small machine. I've been on the fence about getting new gear lately. Been wanting to find something that will draw me into it. I've pondered the idea of a MPCx or a Quantum but haven't decided ... Also I'd like to try a new DAW for fun, something I haven't worked in before like FLstudio sounds fun.

AU: What gear played a central role on this album and how did it change from previous recordings?

CK: If you have seen Subconscious Studios then you know that there is a plethora of choices as to where to go. So there is not a definitve set of same instruments on the album. It's quite varied between modular and virtual synthesis, to small boxes and external pedals and FX. Quite often I'd start out with a jam session on any given day either alone or with my friend Dre Robinson. We'll sometimes lay down three ideas in a day and then I'll save them in a numbered folder. At some point I'll go back and re-examine the idea, and then something about it may be appealing enough to see where the path leads. Over a two or three year period, I can build up quite a number of these and it's always a game of seeing which ones remain interesting and open a particular feeling or direction. After a while it takes on a life of its own and then it feels almost like helping something come into existence. Also keeps it fun that way.

AU: What is the most important thing you learned about life or music?

CK: That life and time are not to be taken for granted. Make the best of things you can. Sometimes people show their true colours and there is nothing worse than getting hurt by someone else's actions. I think its important to find your own personal peace and be mindful of what throws a wrench into that. Surround yourself with things that inspire you and trim down anything that makes you feel otherwise. Be mindful that moods are like weather patterns, and they will shift. Being aware of this also helps to see things for what they are and be in tune with your mortal blessings.

AU: What question do you wish people would ask you but they don't?

CK: Would you like this Lamborghini?

(I drive a VW Beetle 1957! My one and only car.)

AU: How has Covid affected the process of creating music for you?

CK: Well I can't have my regular jam sessions and that I'm finding rather boring. Some people are extra inspired and for the better part of 2020 I worked on the album intensely. Now for 2021, I'm looking at devoting my time on my new module BRAP SY1 and a new toy BASAL BROTHER. Ongoing projects. Music I feel like *Resonance* speaks for me for the last few years. Before that "Unknown Room," with Phil Western was also amongst the tracks I had placed in the musical folder. Before that The Brown Acid Caveat was a two-year collaboration with Edward KaSpel that once that door opens it is a daily pleasure of music exchange. For now with the year not really pointed in any direction, it will be interesting to see what happens. I have had a few groups of people approach me with ideas. So I'll see where the weather takes us!

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Manticore Kiss

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you best known for?

You're talking to Ari Mansell and Kat Bastow also known as Manticore Kiss -

Kat: I am best known for my vocals and keyboard playing

Ari: I am best known for playing violin, cello and being a composer.

AU: Give us a brief history of the band, who is in the band and what are you all about?

MK: The band consists of just the two of us, Ari and Kat.

We both met in 2016 in music school, and began playing in various ensembles together. Gradually we continued to collaborate together more while also working on our own projects and bands that we were already involved in. We started writing together and things really took off as we realized we had a common vision in music along with a similar message.

AU: Are either of you involved in any other musical projects?

Kat: I'm currently in another band, Momy Fortuna.

Ari: I am currently in the band Wolfbrood, and former member of the Chi Pig Trio (may he rest in peace).

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

MK: We would describe our sound as a combination of dark wave, goth, romantic, with a fusion of classical strings and synths with traditional post punk and goth beats. Adding on top a very classical style of vocals. While

sounding current for our time, we still give a nod to the early 80s goth aesthetic and sound. Lyrically we explore various dark and romantic themes, often coming from our own life experiences. We're not trying to recreate the past, but we certainly pay homage to it in the overall sound.

AU: You recently released your debut single, tell us about it! What can we expect to hear?

MK: Yes! We are so excited to have our first single out now finally! The song is called "Aboulia," which describes a certain stage of psychogenic death. A state when a person reaches the point of no motivation, no emotional response, and no longer wanting to



speak. Much like a mental and emotional standby. The song starts off strong with a nice danceable beat and gradually builds with the strings, and ends with the emotional pleading verse of, "Just let me sleep too!" We feel lately a lot of people have been feeling the strain and weight of the pandemic related depression and overall anxiety,

so it was a fitting time to release this when we did! We also have our next single coming out on Valentine's Day! Which will also be a fitting theme. Can't say too much yet, but it is a bit of a love song!

AU: Describe what your live show will be like once things go back to normal?

Kat: Epic! Hugs! So many hugs! I might cry a little.

Ari: Jeeze, our next live show will be on fire! It will really be a special thing to see everyone again and play to a crowd again!

AU: Do your songs explore any particular themes or topics?

Kat: I'd say we explore

some of the darker corners we're told not to talk about. My own personal angle comes from wanting to end the stigma of mental health, so I try to approach each song knowing I could potentially reach out to others who feel the same way, and suddenly, neither of us are alone anymore... there's something so beautiful in that... Ari: We have a variety of themes in our songs. Some of the songs in this EP touch on everything from mental health, being broken and finding hope, and others about romance and loss.

AU: Any more tracks you are working on that you are stoked about?

Kat: Yes to both!

Ari: We have a few new songs currently in the works. I don't think we have any song we aren't stoked about! We are always excited to share new music. Actually it was a difficult decision to choose which songs to release first!

AU: How have you been surviving the Apocalypse? Any survival tips to share?

Kat: WEAR A MASK AND WASH YOUR HANDS!

Ari: We've been surviving so far, trying to stay occupied and busy. But it's been a challenge. Survival tips? I'd have to say, try finding a new hobby, something you've never tried but always been curious about. Find a routine if possible even if it's simple, and above all... AVOID SOCIAL MEDIA! Or at least avoid the negative depressing

stuff! Wear and mask and stay put if you can! Take care of each other!

AU: Any plans for a Covid Valentine's this year?

Kat: Yes! we are celebrating by releasing our newest single, "Intertwined"! And maybe some bubbly...

Ari: Obviously it's going to be a lot more low key for us, but we'll probably get some nice sparkling wine and order a little fancier food delivery than usual, lol.

AU: Any Covid dating advice? Do's and Don'ts?

Kat: Do: make sure you and your date are tested before the date; bring proof.

Don't: show up thinking it's not a big deal if you didn't actually get tested.

Ari: I'd say there is something special about the old school way of getting to know someone by talking, messaging, phone calls etc. BEFORE going on a date in person. If you do eventually meet in



person, be smart, make sure that the other person has also been responsible with their exposure bubble as well. Remember, their bubble becomes your bubble if you want it or not! Just be careful and responsible. If you can get tested do it!

AU: What do you miss most about live music?

Kat: The strong sense of community it cultivates is unlike anything. I miss the applause. I miss that connection performers create with their audience... I miss everything. Hell, I even miss load-in!

Ari: I really miss the energy and the people. Seeing the look on peoples' faces as they have fun and enjoy the music and dancing. I also really miss that rush of getting ready for a show.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? Anything else to promote?

Kat: I'm also an experienced and highly qualified voice teacher! You can find me on Facebook, just look up my page Kat's Vocal Coaching.

Ari: I also compose string quartets! Also Kat and I run a promotion company, Coffin Party Productions.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

Kat: As Lestor Holt says it best, "Take care of yourselves, and each other."

Ari: Be patient, and hang in there! Stay safe and healthy! We'll be back again with live shows one day eventually if we all

work together!

Photos provided by Phaelen Kuehne and David Jacklin

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Rules

Interview by Chuck Andrews

Interview with:

Rules: Ben Rispin (Vocals) - @benrispin

Chuck Coles (Bass / Vocals) - @ChuckColes

Absolute Underground: Rules are a hardcore band from Burlington, Ontario. What is Burlington famous for?

Ben: While a bunch of us grew up around that scene, the band isn't from Burlington. Adam Michael (guitar) and I live in Hamilton, Chuck lives in Toronto, and Alex Standen (drums) lives in Waterdown. We definitely grew up playing in and around the Burlington and 905 scenes of the late '90s and 2000s, but those are kind of extinct as far as the city of Burlington goes right now. These days, Burlington is probably most famous for terrible government and gentrification.

Chuck: For me, Burlington was about Grade, Cutoff, Always Outnumbered, Jersey, Ruins, Boys Night Out, so many great bands. One time in Burlington, my band, Lucky Number 7 opened for legendary US hardcore band, Bane. At the time, it was the farthest stop on the train going west. Hearing that, coming from Oshawa, and going to see that shit live was pretty crazy. There was a hardcore scene in Oshawa and that was like melding scenes together. Just knowing that there was something outside of my area, getting on a train and going as far as you can west as could was something special. The Oshawa scene was my hometown and I learned about hardcore through bands like Rodent, Six Story Psychos, The Cleavers, etc. But there was something in the air. When it came to the Burlington scene. We didn't

have phones or the internet. You'd get a flyer and find out about different bands. I ended up playing with all of the bands I mentioned and became lifelong friends. And that shit rubs off on you whether it's hardcore or not.

AU: You guys play hardcore, but you definitely have other influences. How would you describe your sound?

Ben: I don't consider ourselves a hardcore band. I love that music but feel the term is limiting creatively. We wrote a bunch of heavy songs on acid. That's kind of the deal. We tap into jazz, rock, blues, punk, prog, jam, and anything we've ever heard. Our only goal was to bring our A-Game creatively and try to make something original. I hope we succeeded. To be honest, structurally, not sonically, the songs are more akin to Motown than anything else. I'm not sure where that leaves us genre wise.

Chuck: The sound takes from a lot of different genres of music. Myself, I've had so many opportunities to play different kinds of music. I've had the privilege of playing music with people from all walks of life. I've never focused too much on one genre of music because playing music in its infancy has always been my focus. Within this band, the friendship is such a family, that we all come from different musical pasts. We all love that. We all respect each other's opinions on music. Anything kind of goes.

AU: What bands have influenced this sound?

Ben: I'd say anything from Dead Kennedys to Deep Purple and everything in between. We really don't actively look to outside influence. We grew up playing heavy music in various bands. Since then, we've learned a lot playing with, and producing, bands like Saint Alvia Cartel, Organ Thieves, Chuck Coles and the United Snakes, Say Yes, Penske File, Harm & Ease and so much more. We took what we've learned about creating more accessible music and brought it back to whatever Rules is.

Chuck: Honestly, it's too hard to say. Everything I've ever listened to. But because I'm playing

bass and it's not my primary instrument, I'm going back into what got me into the bass. Dead Kennedys was one of my favourites. From Crass to the Chilli Peppers. Mike Watt. The energy of the MC5. Trying to capture that. Trying to hold down grooves like Porno for Pyros or Jane's Addiction, that's what I was listening to when I really learned the bass.

AU: The new album you guys are putting out is on Stomp Records. And I gather that most of you have played in Stomp Records bands, is the label how you all met? Or have you all been friends for years previously?

Ben: Stomp is taking care of our digital distribution and are some of the best dudes going. I met them while I was playing in a band called The Saint Alvia Cartel and we had a good time with that. They also released my other band The Video Dead, and we've had a solid working relationship since about 2007. Most of Rules met through the 905 punk scene at various times in our lives. We've all released something with Stomp with maybe Adam (guitar) as the exception. His band Say Yes is on Dine Alone. However, he's definitely played as a session player on Stomp released material. The guy is a beast.

Chuck: We met cutting our teeth at different venues or clubs. Opening up for each other. At one point we were all in another band together called The Great Lake Revival, which was spawned from The Saint Alvia Cartel. I remember Ben asked me if I wanted to fill in on bass when Greg Fisher (Saint Alvia) wanted to move from the guitar. That's what inspired me wanting to revisit this instrument. Then Adam Michael took over bass duties with Saint Alvia and I started getting more involved with the Creepshow, who have put out records with Stomp as well. I remember seeing the Penske File, Alex's current touring band, years ago. At that point, I had already been producing, recording, and working with a ton of bands and I recognized his talent. When they opened up for Organ Thieves, his playing was above all. I've worked with him ever since. I've watched him grow into one of the most talented songwriters and drummers I know.

AU: What is the meaning of the title of the new album, *The Bummer Circus Comes to Truth City*? Inquiring minds need to know!

Ben: Well, the term "Truth City" goes back to an inside joke Chuck and I used to have. When we first started our lifelong journey together; maybe back in 2006, we used to hang out in front of the Bovine Sex Club doing drugs and solving the world's problems. He was from the east 905 scene like Oshawa and Whitby. I came from the other 905 which covered the suburbs west of Toronto. Towns like Oakville, Burlington, Hamilton then eventually extending to Niagara Falls. We would laugh and make observations about everything. I think Chuck would follow the anecdotes with, "Truth City". I'd laugh as if he was a prophet or minister. As we got to know each other, that's what we affectionately started calling our hangouts for awhile..

"Yo, you want to tell the "truth-city"?" type jokes. The term just always kind of stuck. It's actually guided our friendship in a pretty healthy way.

The Bummer Circus is kind of a reference to reality, the world, the media, politics, the "circus of life". So, I guess it means, we better deal with this shit. Whatever that shit maybe.

Chuck: Truth City was like an unspoken agreement between us. Most of what we said, most people wouldn't want to hear. So it was like we were

living in our own thing. It was also taking ownership of our shitty behavior. The Bummer Circus is definitely just reality. The truth can be a real bummer.



AU: Best hospitality any of you have ever experienced on tour?

Ben: The Eastern Block, The Bovine Sex Club in Toronto, or Club Absinthe in Hamilton when Tina & Marko owned it.

Chuck: Anywhere in Europe. It's hard to pinpoint a place. It's bar none the best in the world. One time, if I can share a story;

The Creepshow was opening up for The Adolescents in the Czech republic. There was a seven-foot-tall man staring at me. The more I drank, the more he was looking at me. I thought we were gonna go at it. I didn't know if I had done anything to this dude. So I kept getting close to him, and he opened up his arms. I went in for a hug. He picked me up.

Then he said. "Thank you for being here. It means the world you traveled so far." He then gave me a pair of glasses with the band's name etched in it. Then he bought me drinks all night. Europe just hits differently.

AU: Have you guys done any live stream performances? Or do you have plans to do any?

Ben: I've played live streams, but not any during Covid. We've agreed to do something but we're not sure about the specifics.

Chuck: I'd love to do some sort of live stream circus.

Ben: That's a wicked idea.

AU: If you had to name a monthly band section featuring a Burlington band what would it be called? Burly Burlington? Burlington Bad-Asses? or something else?

Ben: I co-own a music showcase called Burly Calling that's been going for 13 years in Burlington, Ontario. I guess I'd call it Burly Calling.

Chuck: That works.

AU: Any Covid dating advice?

Ben: Don't creep people out online just because you're lonely. I have a live-in partner and I try to make her laugh all the time because it masks that I'm useless. Maybe try that?

Chuck: Truth City.

AU: Anything else to promote?

Ben: Check out Halo Studios in Hamilton. We put our producer Marcone through hell and he deserves better.

Chuck: There's an SNFU tribute record coming out on Thought Crimes MFG. Organ Thieves did a cover of "Big Thumbs." Go listen to that.

AU: Final words for Canadian hardcore fans?

Ben: RIP Chi-Pig

Chuck: Listen to SNFU.

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DeeCRACKS

Interview by Chuck Andrews

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today?

Matt: Hey guys, we're DeeCracks from Vienna, Austria. Thanks for having us!

AU: First things first, your latest EP "Can't Get It Right," has a pretty brilliant cover, I love it! For anyone who hasn't seen it, it is a picture of the ALF TV character from the 1980s, with a cat curled up next to him. Very apt title for that image. Are you all big fans of ALF?

Matt: Of course. I grew up with that show back in the 80s, early 90s. Little did I know that my 2020 life would be very similar to his after all...

Mike: I got a big ALF tattoo on my left upper thigh. It's him in a Hawaiian shirt and a thumbs up, underneath it says "Out of this world"... so... yeah, I'm a fan.

AU: Tell us a little bit about how long you have been a band, and where you guys are from?

Mike: We started in 2003 in Klagenfurt, Austria under the name The Cretins. Our first show was at my 18th birthday party and we only played

Ramones covers. We got booked for a second gig right away and after that one we decided to become a real band and write our own songs. In 2007 we got threatened with a lawsuit by the German band the Creetins, which is why we ended up changing the name to DeeCracks later that year. Far better name anyways, haha.

AU: Describe the band's sound if at all possible.

Matt: I am not a big fan of labeling bands but I guess it's necessary, so I'd say we are a straight up punk rock band. We take influences from all relevant decades of the Rock'n'Roll history, not inventing something new but always trying to create something unique.

AU: How did you guys come to be signed to Pirates Press Records?

Mike: Our buddy Moki from the band Get Dead really got into us when we played with them in Paris in 2014. He bought our records and took them back home. He's close friends with some guys at Pirates and played it to them, getting them really into us too. When we recorded *Sonic Delusions* Moki reached out saying we should contact Pirates Press Records about it. So, that's what we did and they welcomed us with open arms. Great label to be on and work with. We couldn't be more happy.

AU: On your 2018 album, *Sonic Delusions*, you have a song called, "Montréal Nights." I assume you guys have toured Canada before?

Matt: Yes, we did. About three times over the last eight years or so. We mostly played shows in

Quebec and Ontario, including Pouzza Fest and Ottawa Explosion. Canada has a great scene and we are always happy to come over!

AU: Ever played in the USA?

Mike: Yeah, we toured the US four times, or let's say three times in four attempts. Our last US tour was in the summer of 2013 together with Direct Hit and the Jetty Boys. We started the tour in Michigan, then we drove to Canada for our first Canadian shows in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. After those shows we got denied re-entering the USA because we didn't have the right paperwork and had to cancel the remaining 22 shows. We have since been banned from the US unfortunately. We hope to make it back someday, but we're happy to come to Canada more often.

AU: Pizza or cheeseburgers?

Mike: Pizza!

Matt: Pizzburger!

AU: Who are your Canadian favourite punk bands?

Mike: Oh boy, there are so many... Teenage Head, Pointed Sticks, No Means No, The Hanson Brothers, Sonic Avenues, Steve Adamyk Band, the Isotopes, Boids, Chixdiggit, Vapids, Outtacontroller and more.

Matt: Yeah, the list goes on and on. I'd mention D.O.A., the Modernettes or the B Girls as well.

AU: Favourite new punk bands? Doesn't matter which country.

Matt: Honestly, I hardly ever come across new bands. One that caught my attention is the Plastic Heads from Toronto. I'd say they are "new." Real cool KBD style punk.

Mike: Tough question actually, I haven't seen any new bands since the pandemic hit. Last good one I saw was a new band from Vienna called F.E.I.D.L., but I'm not sure what happens in basements and garages these days. I'm sure there's a lot of talent waiting to be heard. I will let you know in the next

interview.

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day this year?

Mike: I'm gonna get tested and drive to my hometown to visit my parents. They got married on Valentine's Day 40 years ago. So, we wanna try and meet and celebrate.

Matt: Probably wear a clean T-shirt with no holes, shave and smile.

AU: Any Covid dating/relationship advice?

Matt: Wear a clean T-shirt with no holes, shave and smile.

Mike: Hard to say, I'm bad in both, nobody should ever ask me.

AU: Anything else you want to promote?

Matt: Besides our new record *Serious Issues*. Out March 12 on Pirates Press Records (LP), Dumb Records, Striped Records (CD), no.

Mike: Yeah! Since Canadians are reading this, I gotta promote my hockey themed punk band Trauma Centrum - Süd. I'm a big hockey fan, so is my whole family. My brother is a musician also, he played drums for Leftover Crack, Antimaniac and the Incredible Staggers and has his own solo project called Candy Beat Camp. We started this hockey band as a duo. Just drums and bass. Look out for some tunes coming up online soon.

AU: Final words for Canadian fans in our ice fishing huts?

Matt: Never surrender... and stay away from poutine.

Mike: Please send me some poutine and don't tell Matt I said that.

AU: How do people find you online?

Mike: You can find us on the usual platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. We have a Bandcamp page and a website also. Just look for us if you are interested.

deecracks.bandcamp.com

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ARTIST PROFILE



Archer

Interview by Claude Montreuil

Absolute Underground: When did you start creating works of art?

Paul Archer: I began drawing at the age of 3 and I started working professionally when I was 20.



AU: What was your inspiration during the moment you first began your artistic journey?

PA: I was always fascinated and inspired by the large fresco murals that were created by the masters, from the renaissance era.

AU: Who are the artists and musicians who inspire you?

PA: Michelangelo, Da Vinci, Rembrandt and Salvador Dali were always huge inspirations for me. As for musicians, I love everything from classic rock to classical composition, from Van Halen to Van Gogh.

AU: What was the first show you attended? The last one?

PA: My first concert was T-Rex and the last show I saw was the CannaFest musical festival with Cheap Trick and Poisons' Bret Michaels. I work with my art at concerts, so I have seen many live shows in my lifetime.



AU: What is the best music venue in Victoria and what is the best show you have seen there?

PA: I have enjoyed many shows at the

Save-On-Foods arena but I thoroughly enjoyed Supertramps' Roger Hodgson at the Royal Theatre.

AU: I hear that you help other artists to create and exhibit their art at your store, can you tell us a bit about that?

PA: I have a huge shop at 847 Fort Street, where I feature several local artists in my showroom. Each artist is very different. All of us enjoy inspiring young artists who come here for a visit. I believe a true artist is not one who is inspired but one who inspires others.

AU: Where is your store located?

PA: Our showroom is located in the old Prices Alarms building at 847 Fort Street, right off the corner of Fort & Quadra.

AU: What is coming next for you?

PA: I have around 10 clients waiting for murals in Vancouver but hardly anything here in my hometown of Victoria, which

surprises me! Most of my work can be seen throughout British Columbia, western

Canada, some in the United States and many more murals are located in the Caribbean, some as far as Central America.

AU: What motivates you to create art?

PA: Art is like an addiction for me, if I am not painting, I literally get withdrawals and the shakes!

AU: What is your dream goal in life?

PA: My dream is to eventually write the book of

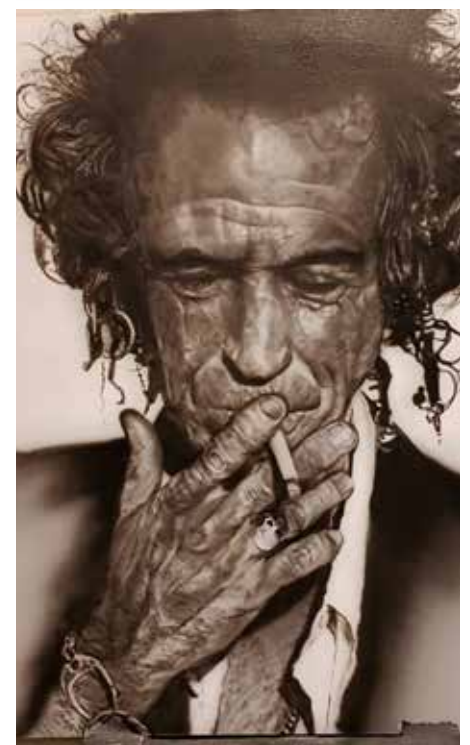
my life story, to inspire the younger generations to live as I have with a career doing what you love! I hope to spread the message to follow your dreams because most people are afraid to take a step into the deep end, they feel they need

to join the 'workforce' and punch a time clock.

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BLAST FROM THE PAST



Blast From The Past

Hi folks. Today we time warp a short trip back into my memory lane.

It happened 35 years ago on Valentine's Day in 1986. The adventure was a road trip from Victoria B.C. to Seattle, Washington and it came in the form of a concert at the Seattle Centre Coliseum on a Friday evening. The headlining act was of course KISS. Purrfect band for that day.

Opening for KISS were W.A.S.P., a shock metal band from L.A.

Having borrowed mom's car for the journey (mom not included), my brother and I, along with two friends, Matt and Tim, (who was only 14 and also needed a note from his mom to cross the border into the U.S. I recently saw Tim in 2018 at his book store hosting Geddy Lee's book signing, and we

actually talked about this journey as Ged listened. As KISS had played with Rush for years he seemed to smile at our fun memory. Anyway, back to 1986...

In the fall of 1985 KISS released its 13th studio LP entitled ASYLUM. It was the 3rd album without their trademark makeup. KISS was also surviving many departed guitarists as well. First with the 'departure' of Space Ace Frehley in 1982. And then Vinnie Vincent who left in 1983 followed by Mark St. John who had health issues sadly. Yet this was the debut LP for the one and only Bruce Kulick who joined the band in 1984.

It seemed like a revolving door for lead guitarists, yet Bruce stuck it out for 12 glorious years and 5 great Lps, until the originals reunited in 1996.

During this great time for Rock n Roll, Heavy Metal was in full bloom and a lot of bands seemed to adapt the 'glam' look too. KISS did not hold back during this time either, their most flamboyant indeed. Opening acts W.A.S.P. took the stage at 8 pm and looked like an early KISS or Mötley Crüe. W.A.S.P. played their own



blend of heavy, speedy hard rock throughout their set which included a stage prop of four W.A.S.P. member's huge heads on top of 10 foot tall pencils. Massive eraser heads! You left knowing what they looked like for one, and they played their asses off too.

I really enjoyed W.A.S.P. and now it was time for the headliners, KISS. This was my second KISS show as I had been a fan since 1976 and although I missed their glory years and was grounded in 1977 missing their 'Love Gun' show in Calgary. I was 10 and I was crushed. Still am!

However in Feb 1985 I saw Queensrÿche and KISS, and KISS was simply fucking awesome. Bar none. So here I was with my friends awaiting the moment of the lights going down. And when they did there was, as always, an intense feeling of excitement that no other band has ever come close to. I was 18 and I was ready to rock. The hum of the amps and then the announcement came "YOU WANTED THE BEST... YOU GOT THE BEST... THE HOTTEST BAND IN THE WORLD... KIIIIIIIIIIISS !!!

And thus the show had begun. Detroit Rock City opened in high gear. They played Cold Gin next, followed by a very brave Bruce Kulick showcasing his guitar solo skills in top form. I was happily impressed. Bruce was the perfect member for all those years. Sensational guitarist.

KISS performed a near two hour blissfully exciting set of pure NYC style original Rock 'N' Roll with the exception of a really good cover song added. That song was 'Won't Get Fooled Again' (by The WHO) and it was very well done. The films can now be found on Bruce Kulick's youtube channel since the 35th anniversary of Asylum last fall. This version KISS played included Gene, Paul, and the late Eric Carr each singing a verse. How awesome was this? WOW!



A KISS show is always a celebration or Rock n Roll freedom and the lifestyle that comes with it. This night celebrated the era of the heavy metal decade that was the 1980s. KISS put it all together once again and my brother and I and our two friends got what we came for. KABOOM!

Explosions and fog machines, lights and lasers, let alone four incredible Rockstars too, who performed an incredible set list that evening.

KISS: Gene Simmons, Paul Stanley, Eric Carr, and Bruce Kulick.

The 85/86 ASYLUM Tour U.S.A. Seattle and we were there.

Since then I've seen KISS 17 more times. The next one is number 20.

Alright people. Until next time. Rock Out... Roll On...

- Clark 'Super' Mantei



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The Peelers

Interview with Dave Barton
By Chuck Andrews

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to today and what are you best known for?

Dave Barton: Hey Ira and Chuck! My name is Dave and I'm the lead singer, songwriter, and rhythm guitarist for The Peelers. However, I'm best known for my failed line of whiskey infused skin care products called "Regret." Ok, I made the last part up.

AU: The Peelers hail from North Glengarry in Ontario, but now call Montréal, Quebec home. What specifically caused the move?

DB: Yeah, my best friend and Irish whistle/organ

player in The Peelers, Eric, and I grew up in small town Ontario right on the Quebec border about 25 mins from the West Island of Montreal. So we spent a lot of time misplacing our innocence in the city growing up. The band, when it started was made up of friends of ours from home, but we're the only two original members remaining. I'm the only one currently of the six members that doesn't live in Quebec. It just made sense to base the band in the city. So specifically, I guess gradual change caused the move. But it's always been like a second home to us.

AU: What are your favourite things about Montréal?

DB: My standard answer is the European flavour, the diversity of the people, the arts, the nightlife, the cuisine, the vibrancy, and the uniqueness of Canada's second largest city from a language perspective. However, on a much more personal

level... it was always the big city, just beyond the horizon, down the highway from home. It represented risk, escape, and possibility. The city's history has an edge, an underbelly, and I've always thrived on those aspects when writing. It also has a very rich Irish heritage, which I draw upon frequently.

AU: Who writes the lyrics in the band? The words to tracks such as "Spirits Seldom Sober" and "Rakes Around the Point" on the new album *Down and Out in the City of Saints* are great. They really tell a story that the listener can imagine.

DB: Really cool to hear you say that, so thank you. I write the lyrics and it's something I take a lot of pride in, and pay a ton of attention to. A lot of rewrites and amendments right up until we record

vocals. I like to think as I've matured I've come to understand how easy it is to be a cliché in this genre. We're not Irish. We are descendants living in North America. So my stories are from the perspective of the diaspora. They include artistic licence, but most of the time I write about characters I've known or studied, and personal experience.

AU: Speaking of "Spirits Seldom Sober" and lyrics, I assume there is meant to be a bit of a nod to "The Sick Bed of Cuchulainn" by The Pogues in there?

DB: Interesting. I think in spirit there's a little 'Sick Bed' in all our songs, as it's one of my favourite MacGowan tunes.

I wish I knew what exactly you were referring to, as there was definitely nothing intentional. That song is 100% non-fiction, it's an amalgamation of 22 years of stories, people, places, heartache and travel with this band. I compacted as much as I could into a narrative about one individual who represents every current and former member of this band. I did it consciously in a nostalgic state of mind. It's a scrapbook of sorts. And while I didn't expect it to be a focal point, we've had a lot of favourable response from listeners pre-release.

AU: I see you guys had a guest from out west on your new Stomp Records album, *Down and Out in the City of Saints*, Mr. Dan Garrison from Vancouver, BC's The Corps. How did you guys get hooked up with Dan?

DB: Ohhh Danny boy! We were getting ready for our Canadian tour in September 2018, and our then lead guitarist actually bailed a week before our first date. So, we scrambled to find a replacement who could learn quickly, and I believe a recommendation came from one of the Planet Smashers about this cat named Dan who had just come off a stint with The Real McKenzies' So we contacted him, met all his Axl Rose-esque demands, flew him out to Montreal to join the tour, and the rest is history. It's funny how things work out. He fit in so well, was super easy to travel with, and we've become really good friends ever since. The Corps were on our Vancouver date last March, just before the bottom fell out. Amazing band, better humans. Can't wait to get back out to visit.

AU: What food fares best with an Irish Car Bomb? I kid, but seriously do people buy those for you guys on tour when shots are



suggested?

DB: I don't remember a clear instance of having those bought for us, but I'd be willing to bet it's happened. Usually by the time those show up the night is a little foggy anyway. Generally it's whiskey, or pints. Preferably a good Irish whiskey *wink wink*. But uh, to answer your original question, it's a Baked Dijon Salmon.

AU: Best local dark beer?

DB: Well I'll cheat and go local to my hometown in Ontario since it was also available in Quebec. Our old friends at Beau's All Natural, my good pal, Montrealer, and brewer Matt O'Hara's 'The Tom Green Beer' which is a delicious milk stout made in collab with the man himself. Montreal has so many great craft breweries, brasseries, and brew pubs I'm doing this to avoid a difficult decision.

AU: Favourite place or places to play on tour in Canada?

DB: Well Montreal of course, great crowds, good times. Quebec City is fun too, Halifax as well. But we've really developed an affinity for Vancouver. Such a great town, and very different from the east. It's what makes this country special. We also had a crazy night in Whistler a couple of years back.

AU: Any Covid dating advice?



DB: Ha! I think I'm the only single one in the band... maybe one other? And I've been so busy, dates have been few and far between. As a matter of fact, if anyone has any advice for me, I'm all ears. I do know one thing: wear a mask out! Otherwise, get a really good internet connection.

AU: Anything else to promote?

DB: We have a few albums prior to this one, that were released independently, available on all your favourite streaming services. We're working on a couple of videos for this release. We're hoping to get out and tour again in the fall, fingers crossed. And I'm currently writing the next album. But mostly check out Stomp, amazing label, killer bands!

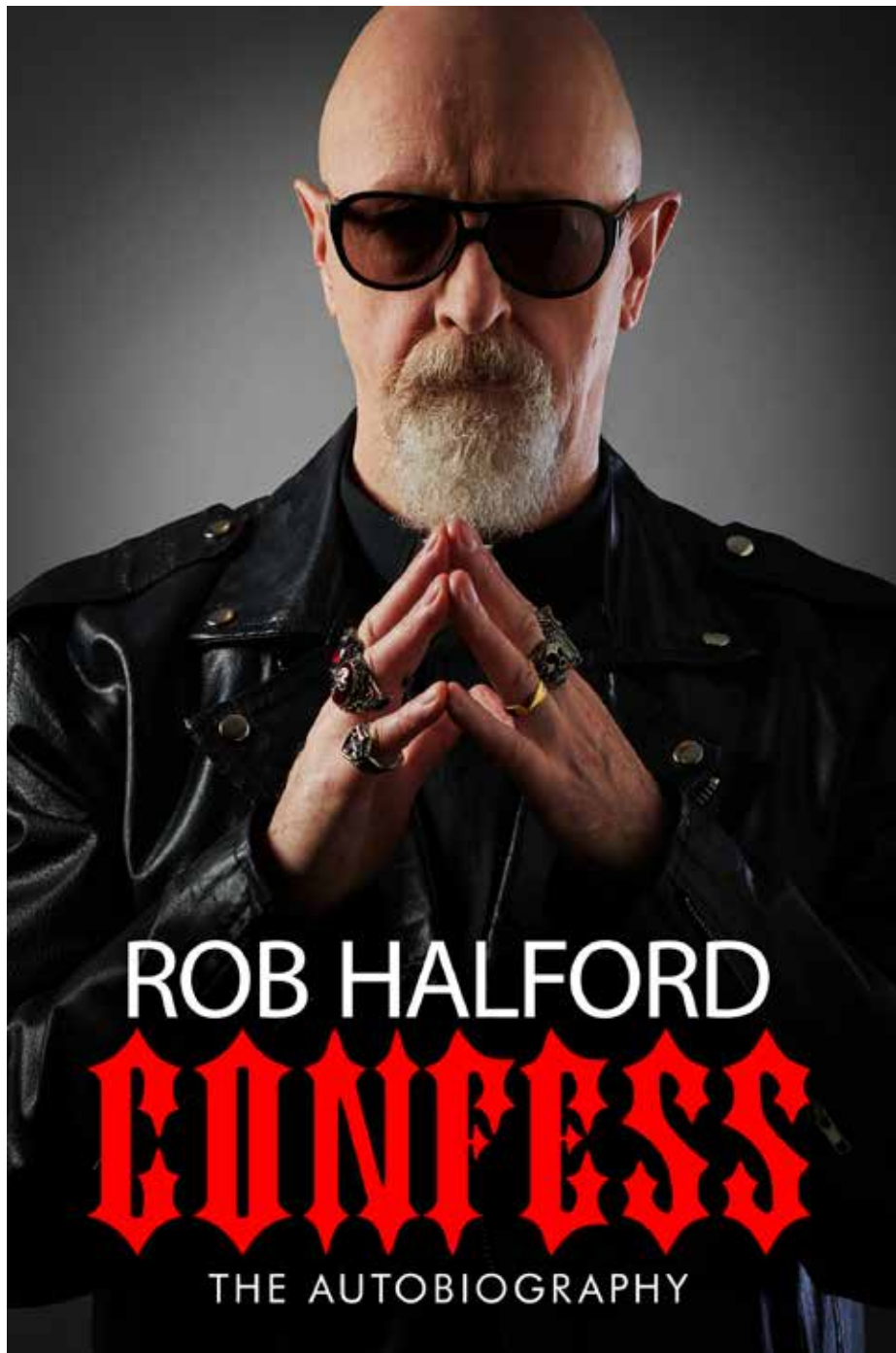
AU: How do people find you online?

DB: We're on the big socials, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and our website is the-peelers.com. We've got a nice little dedicated page on the Stomp Records site as well. Please logon and say hi!

AU: Final words for Canadian fans?

DB: We sincerely hope you enjoy the new album, but moreover we'd like everyone to stay safe and respect each other, so we can climb out of this and all get back to live music and doing what we love.

the-peelers.com



Rob Halford *CONFESS: The Autobiography*

Interview by Ira Hunter

The legendary frontman of Judas Priest celebrates five decades of rocking in this tell-all memoir.

Most priests hear confessions; this one is making his. Rob Halford, front man of global iconic metal band Judas Priest and true “Metal God,” tells his gospel truth in *CONFESS: The Autobiography* from Hachette Books.

CONFESS is Halford’s full autobiography and an unforgettable rock ‘n’ roll story—a journey from a Walsall council estate to musical fame via alcoholism, addiction, police cells, ill-starred sexual trysts, and bleak personal tragedy, through to rehab, coming out, redemption... and finding love. Halford’s story winds through his inner-city working-class roots to finding his calling in music, including his experience as a gay man in the macho world of rock, all while selling over 50 million albums.

CONFESS is the story of an extraordinary five decades in the music industry. It is also the tale of unlikely encounters with everybody from Superman to Andy Warhol, Madonna, Jack Nicholson, and the Queen.

More than anything else, it’s a celebration of the fire and power of heavy metal.

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with, and how long has it been since your last confession?

Rob Halford: It’s been a while. But to make a confession is good for the soul.

Actually, I’ve been pretty good since the book

came out. I think it was a life changer. I don’t think I’ve got much left that needs confessioning, to be quite honest.

AU: What was the genesis for the idea of writing the book?

RH: Well, you know, it’s not unusual for musicians to put something like this together. I’ve been asked about doing this kind of book since, probably in my 40s. Management would say, “Oh this publisher wants to know if you’ll do an autobiography?” And I’d say, “No, it’s too early, I got a lot more metal work to do, let’s just wait.” Then it’s like some internal clock, something clicks, and a little alarm goes off, now is the time to do it. Let’s do it. So it was a combination of that, but what led the idea to become more real was Ian Gittins, he’s what we call a local lad, from around the same region. So my first conversations with him really put me in a good place. You really only get one chance, one shot at doing a book like this, to do it properly. I wanted to make sure that whoever I worked with, really treated me with respect and took me to the places I needed to be taken to just get the job done properly.

AU: So you worked on the book with Ian Gittins?

RH: Ian is the guy that I sat and confessed to for hours and hours. Yeah.

AU: You didn’t really hold much back. But I was just curious if there was anything else that you wanted to confess that didn’t make it into the book, anything that was too risqué or off the wall?

RH: I discovered this legal side of autobiographies, that kind of made us have to shift some things around in some, in some cases, leave them out altogether. You and I have talked in the past [AU issue 91] and this whole business of my sobriety was based on honesty and speaking the truth, truth to power. The fact that some of the stuff that I felt was

important, couldn’t be used for legal reasons was a bit disappointing. But I understand the way the world works, sometimes you have to keep things locked in the drawer but there’s plenty of other information that can fill those spaces. Ian really took me through my life in the chapters of this book, in a way that it’s like a movie when you’re reading it. It takes you through the ups and downs of life, and the joy and the sadness, the challenges and the goals that we all go through, basically, it’s just coming from this Metal God’s point of view.

AU: How did you feel when you were done writing the book? Was it a cathartic experience for you to get everything out there?

RH: I’m just grateful for who I am and where I’m from, because people from the Midlands from Walsall, we don’t really make a fuss that much. You set the task, you get into the task, and you complete it. So in the last interview that I finished with Ian and when he left my kitchen, in the house in Walsall, he wandered off around the corner, to go and see his mum and that was it. The book was done. In the interviewing, confessional sense. Then it was Ian’s challenge to take 50-60 hours of the chats and make sense of them, and put the transcripts together. When I was actually doing the audio for the book, months later, that’s when I think the real value of having this extraordinary life started to really connect. Even as I would be reading and thinking, oh my god, did that really happen?

AU: Have people approached you to make a documentary?

RH: No, it’s funny, because when the book came out, some months ago now, but people were still binging on the Queen biopic and Elton John biopic and the release of the things that were happening and *The Dirt* and so forth. “Who’s going to play Rob Halford, who’s going to play the Metal God?” and it never even crossed my mind. Quite frankly, I don’t think it’ll ever happen. But those are just the kind of extra moments that come from a project like this.

AU: Was coming out of the closet on MTV one of the hardest things you’ve ever had to do in your life/career?

RH: Was it the hardest?... Well, I think it’s an integral thread of the book. I think that the suppression, the mental suppression, the psyche, of having to kind of be in hiding, obviously, was doing some damage. That’s what led to the excessive drinking and drugging. But I don’t know whether it was absolutely the hardest. It’s an important part of who I am, I think it’s an important part of self love and self discovery.

You have to kick open that door, you got to smash through the closet, and just say, “This is who I am, if you don’t like it, fuck off.” You’ve got to be pretty brutal, self reliant and self resilient in that respect. It’s only you that makes that decision. But it was a strong moment for me that’s for sure.

AU: Is it kind of humorous, looking back on things like *Heavy Metal Parking Lot*, now, and just almost shaking your head that all of us young rockers just had no clue even though you were wearing all the leather gear from bondage clubs and all that stuff. We were just so oblivious.

RH: Well, I’ve addressed this quite a bit. It’s just kind of humorous, I mean, that whole leather bondage life is for straight people and for gay people. It’s just the irony that was drawn into it, from my perspective, from my angle, it was the last thing in my mind to walk out on stage, looking like that, I still do occasionally look like

that, and looking at the crowd going, “Haha, you don’t have a clue. Haha, I’m rubbing your face in my gayness and you don’t know.” That was never my intent or my agenda, it’s always been about the music and the look, the visual perception of the band has always been extremely important to Priest. We latched onto something that was a game changer. Because when Priest started to look and dress that way it gave a lot of metal bands around the world an opportunity to go “Yeah, look at them. That’s exactly how we should look.” That essence and strong imagery is exactly what matches the sound of the music. It’s an interesting discussion. When I look back at that moment, the start of the band’s image change, if you will, as being very important for the life of Priest in every way.

AU: How are you feeling about the new political landscape in America now seeing that you spend half your time in Arizona?

RH: Well, I try to avoid politics, but it’s impossible because it’s in your life, it’s kind of intrusive. You attach yourself to politicians that are going to do something good for you and for the LGBTQ community, this current administration is just a blessing. It was different until now. Now, I think there’s gonna be some respect and I think they’re going to do some incredible things.

AU: This is gonna be our Valentine’s Day issue. I was hoping I could ask you, just a couple of questions related to that? If that’s okay?

RH: Are you gonna take me out to dinner?

AU: I would love to. Any plans for Valentine’s this year?

RH: It’s almost February?! One second it’s Christmas and now almost Valentine’s? Unbelievable. Me and the other half been together for 1000 years now, and he’s not much of a Valentine’s person. But I’ll start dropping hints, so I’ll get a box of chocolates and a card or there will be hell to pay. Valentine’s is good for what it represents and what it stands for, about showing some love to your loved one or your friends or your family. How cool is that? You know, don’t dissect it too much. It’s just a beautiful day, that means a lot to so many people. It’s going to be particularly difficult this February 14th, because last February 14th the world was a different place. We could all go out to dinner, we could all go out and have a picnic and a party and we won’t be able to do that this year. We’ll be doing it in a different way. Like we had to celebrate Christmas and everything in a different way. But we will, this is resilience. I think that this Valentine’s is going to be special in that respect, as we get through this pandemic, and you get light at the end of the tunnel. This Valentine’s is full of love and hope and great concern for the future.

AU: Any advice for people starting a relationship in the COVID era?

RH: Don’t let it stop you, listen to the scientists, you know what to do and what not to do. No matter what challenges you face in life, finding a person, loving the person, working on your relationship that really boils down again to some of the simple basic building blocks of having a stable life. So I wouldn’t really change anything, there’s always somebody out there for you. If you haven’t got anybody right now, you’ll find somebody, that’s the way it works. It took me forever to find Thomas. But there you go. You know, there’s always “The One.”

AU: What would it have said on your Tinder profile before you met Thomas?

RH: Oh my god, I think I was on Grindr for a

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week. I never use it in a sexual encounter but I did have it with me while we were on tour. The place where my Grindr went off the most was in Brussels, which is the heart of the EU. I turned my phone on and it went ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping. Next door, a floor above, a floor below. But I ditched Grindr after that. It's too precarious for a person like me, I stopped all that kind of shenanigans a long time ago. Oh but what did it have? "Hot guy with a big dick seeks a good time!"

AU: Any dating do's and don'ts that you live by?

RH: Be yourself. I think it's important when you're working on relationships not to try and disguise yourself, just be who you are.

AU: The last show you played in Abbotsford it was really cool because after the show you and the whole band came out to the back parking lot and signed autographs, I thought that was a very unique experience for a band of your stature.

RH: We never forget the people that put us where we are today, and if you do, you're insulting the fans. Sometimes it's difficult after the show, especially at this point, you want to go have a tea and a sleep. But no, your life and your success is based on everybody that supports you. If you can't find a few minutes to make that connection, to take a selfie or to shake a hand... that type of exchange lives forever. And that's just being kind and being respectful and acknowledging the fans that are giving you the life that you've got, because without your fans, you've got nothing.

AU: I know you guys were on a tear with your tour and that must have been cut short. Is there a plan in the future for Priest to get back on the road?

RH: We've got reschedule plans shuffling about for this year, please god let it happen. If it doesn't, so what, we'll have to wait a bit longer. We're all going mental. I can't wait to get back out on the road again because that's what I've done all my life as a musician. But it's a stupid thing to go and run out there and risk your life and risk the fan's lives. It's like Russian roulette, we don't need to do that to each other. Things are getting better, which is why we'll wait a little bit longer if we have to.

AU: What do you see happening in the unwritten chapters for you in the future?

RH: It's easy going for me at this point, I'm

coasting. I've put the metal cruise thing on and I'm just sort of sitting back and enjoying it, because everything else now is a blessing. You know we've still got ambitions and things to do in Priest. I never expected to be still screaming out metal hits as I hit 70. It's a joy and I'm so grateful. So let's keep doing it. Let's keep the metal roaring.

AU: When and how did the idea to bring a motorcycle out on stage come about? Do you ride?

RH: Bikes have been in my life ever since I was a little kid. My dad was an avid motorcycle rider. We also had a bike in the entry of the house. So I kind of got the bikes through going out with my dad on his when I was a little kid. The first time we used a bike I think was in Nottingham at a club. We got there and there were some bikers parked in the alley and I asked one of them if I could use one of their bikes on stage, for "Hell Bent for Leather," and he said yeah, so we took it out and that was it. That was the night history was written for Priest, in the motorcycle world. Bikes are my life and I was riding bikes avidly until I had my back injury some years ago. It's just difficult for me to sit on the bike for any length of time now, I miss it badly.

AU: You had some like horror elements in early



songs like "The Ripper," are you a fan of horror movies?

RH: Oh yeah, I love that campy stuff and some



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of the reality based stuff. Jack the Ripper was a real guy, wasn't he. That's just part of the colour, texture and character that we've made in Priest. We talked about these people before "Sentinel," "The Ripper," "The Necromancer," "Painkiller," you know, they're all these great metal figments of the imagination that become alive because you wrote a song about them. So I'm drawn to that. There are still a quantity of characters from the West Midlands region that have opportunities to be written about. Two or three that I have in mind while we're speaking that are waiting to be unleashed at some point in the future.

AU: In the book you mention that you read comic books when you were younger? Do you still read comics?

RH: Not so much now, no. I'm still in my book world, I'm just about to start The Pillars of the Earth prequel (*The Evening and the Morning*) by Ken Follett. Thomas finished it last night and gave me the book, so that's my next quest. I like comics though, I think comics are really fantastic escapism, full of wonderful stories, and very engaging. Especially the darker ones. I like that kind of energy that comes off the page.

AU: Looking back over some of your lyrics, there's definitely some hidden sexual innuendos. Were those intentional?

RH: The only one that really had a strong intent was "Raw Deal," which is about Fire Island off the coast of New York. I still can't really remember how that came about. I mean, I don't know why I wrote that, it was just some kind of subconscious thing. Everything we do in Priest we have to get the thumbs up. It's not just "Oh I've done this so we've got to do it." It's very much a case of everybody agreeing on the subjects and particularly when it comes to the vocals and lyrics. So when I'd written these words and we sat around to look at them closer You know, there weren't any kind of, "Oh hang on a minute this is a bit gay isn't it?" None of that. It was just these really cool words and it's a great story and let's use it because they're going to match perfectly with the instrumentation of the song. So that really was just me talking about a person that goes to Fire Island and talks about the things that he sees and so forth. And then it ends with that expression, love knoweth no laws. And which it

is, love doesn't have any laws guiding it. It's just love, you know, love is love. So there was only that one. Then the story about "Jawbreaker," which was terribly diluted and then inflated because I said something frivolous. It's nothing other than being about pent up anger and frustration and pushing back and fighting back at persecution. That's what "Jawbreaker" was about but it got sent off into a different direction because I had a bit of a difficult conversation with an interviewer and I told him it was about something else. Then the word went around "Oh my god he's writing songs about big cocks." I never ever had that intent.

AU: There's some celebrities that you meet in the book. Were there any moments when you were actually starstruck?

RH: Oh, I suppose you can get starstruck by Her Majesty the Queen. I mean, I was starstruck.

That moment I met Jack Nicholson, because he's just an extraordinary actor, incredibly talented man and a great personality. So yeah, I was definitely struck by him. Then even my friends in the business, meeting Jimmy Page on a helicopter in Rio. This is the guy who I would listen to years prior, in my bedroom listening to Led Zeppelin. Now I'm sitting on a helicopter with him going with him to Rock in Rio, you can't make that up. I think having heroes in your life is a value, especially heroes that have done things of substance.

AU: People can find the book everywhere?

RH: Yeah, it's still out there. It's done really well. Thank you to everybody that's got into it.

AU: Final words for Canadian fans?

RH: Well, for our Canadian fans, give each other a virtual hug if you have to. Give each other a real one if you can. Enjoy the day and count your blessings and love one another.

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Steel Panther Lockdown Love

Interview with skins pounder Stix Zadinia
By Ira "Heavy Metal" Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most famous or infamous for?

SZ: My name is Stix Zadinia. I'm most famous for being the drummer in the greatest heavy metal band in the world, Steel Panther and I'm most infamous for playing drums with dildos.

AU: Are you are you sponsored by a dildo company?

SZ: No, but I'm always looking for sponsors.

AU: How have you been surviving the apocalypse? Any survival tips to share?

SZ: Weed gummies for sure. I've been getting

stoned writing a lot of music. I've been golfing, which has been great. I know this is going to sound pessimistic but don't get your hopes up. By that I mean, don't be like, they gotta lift all the restrictions tomorrow. Don't do that because I did that in the beginning and it was fucked. So now I just don't even think about it. I just keep keep doing whatever it is I'm doing. If I'm writing music, if I'm making sweet, sweet love to a fine woman by a fire on a bearskin rug. I just focus on the task at hand. It's gonna do what it's gonna do and people are trying to make it so we can do all the regular things but in the meantime, just focus on making love.

AU: Do you find it a different type of high with edibles, as opposed to smoking it?

SZ: Yeah, for me eating it is way more of a body thing. When I smoke it's way more of a head thing. I like the edibles at night. I can just kind of seep into my bed and I don't even remember falling asleep. When I smoke weed, I can remember kind of fading off into sleep. But when I eat an edible it's just like melt city.

AU: And eating ain't cheating...

SZ: Eating ain't cheating. No, not in any form.

AU: What's new and exciting in the Steel Panther camp?

SZ: We have a lot of irons in the fire. We have a lot of plans for this year. We're going to be doing more live streams.

We're going to be recording new original music. We're going to be releasing a couple of covers. We're going to be putting together some quarantine videos of some cover songs. I think that there's no other band that will sound cooler doing these songs than Steel Panther and that's not me being arrogant. It's just like straight facts, scientific facts. Lots of good things to focus on, which is nice. In this pandemic, you can either get busy doing nothing, or you can get busy doing something, and we're going for something.

get busy doing something, and we're going for something.

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day this year?

SZ: No way, man. To me every day is Valentine's Day. I'm a lover and I have a lot of lovers. If I tried to focus on all my lovers, on Valentine's Day, there's just not enough hours in the day. So every day is like Valentine's Day to me. So I don't have anything special planned. Just a whole bunch of love making.

AU: Any advice for people trying to date in the COVID era?



SZ: God. Dude, this is like a test, like a hard test. I should have studied. I guess, the CDC which is our Center for Disease Control, they recommend Glory Holes in the COVID times, like that's a real thing. So maybe, forego the breathing on each other's mouth and nose and face, maybe just don't kiss for a while, right? Maybe just go down on each other. Or you can do it from behind, wear a mask and just get it on.

AU: My friend Mr. Plow's job was drilling glory holes when he worked for a porn company.

SZ: That is an essential worker, is what that is.

AU: Any other COVID dating Do's and Don'ts?

SZ: If you're just meeting someone, don't be afraid to ask if they're COVID free. You've got to ask the





a tough thing to do, especially in Heavy Metal where it's super macho, right? To have balls big enough to just say, you know what this is what I'm into, this is me. I have nothing but respect and love for Rob. But the other part was like, my brain exploded in the sense that I went, "Aahhh man, that's what all that leather was about." You'd see it and he had a short haircut and he'd wear bitching

question. But if they say yes, then it's on. I don't have a lot of Do's and Don't's because I haven't been going out on many dates myself. These are all just chicks that I know, that I'll see. I'll be like, "Hey Stacy, you want to come over, or whatever." Sometimes I have worn a mask if I feel like they've been exhibiting risky behaviour. But for the most part here is the Do, be sensible and here is the Don't, don't be a fucking idiot.

AU: What does it currently say on your Tinder profile? What does it say for the rest of the Steel Panther members?

SZ: My profile says: Fuck it, it's go time. It has a picture of me with two thumbs up shot gunning a beer held by an Eskimo.

On Lexxi's Tinder profile: it just says: Sex? But that's not because he's asking if you want sex. He's saying what sex do you think I am? Am I a male or a female? Which is cool. I'm down with it. I love the guys on the fence. I think that's fantastic. He's very comfortable in his own skin and that's really what it comes down to.

Satchel's Tinder profile says: My house, eight o'clock, be there.

Michael's is: Man, I love me some Michael Starr.

AU: What were your initial thoughts when Rob Halford first came out of the closet on MTV?

SZ: I was happy for him. I had two thoughts. I was really really happy for him because that's hard, I don't know what that's like, but that's got to be

leather clothes with the spikes. That's fucking so metal. But when you strip it back, and you go, "Ahh he's into that scene." Because there is a scene in the gay community, the leather scene and it just made so much sense. It was like an epiphany for me. I put, two and two and two together. I was like "Ok, I get it now, that's cool!" He knew all along. I don't think any of us knew, maybe his band knew, but they kept it a very well hidden secret. When he came out I was happy for him. That must have felt liberating and freeing to not have to keep up the facade anymore. I think of the chick in the documentary *Heavy Metal Parking*, the question was, "What would you do if you saw Rob Halford?" and she says "Jump his bones." I look back now and go, "No, you wouldn't have got your bones jumped. Rob would have been like, "Thank you, but no."

AU: Has Steel Panther ever hung out with Judas Priest?

SZ: Judas Priest took us out on tour and they were nothing short of amazing. As guys who are in a legendary band, they treated us with such respect. They treated us as well as a seasoned legendary Heavy Metal band could treat an opening band. They were fucking awesome.

AU: Does anyone in Steel Panther secretly play for both teams?

SZ: You know, I'm not gonna say no. I can't say no, because there's questions, there's just questions.

Questions that remain unanswered and I'm not going to be the guy that tries to solve them.

AU: Were Rob and Lexxi hanging out a little bit on that tour?

SZ: No, I don't know that Lexxi is Rob's type, nor do I think Rob would be Lexxi's type. I think Lexxi's type has no facial hair. Rob has a goatee.

AU: Are you worried at all about the new political landscape being so politically correct now? And might it affect potential Steel Panther songs in the future?

SZ: It won't affect Steel Panther songs. We hang out outside of that, and we write outside of that. We feel pretty passionately about not changing from what we do. We started this band one way and we enjoy the way that it is. If I said, "God, I love that bitch." It's meant with love. It's kind of the way we speak sometimes, you know? Just because somebody's said, "You can't say that," because it offends them. You know, you don't have to listen. That's just what we do. We say things a certain way and we certainly don't mean to hurt anyone's feelings. But if we started bending and doing stuff because people told us it wasn't cool to do what we do, we may as well just stop being in this band and go be in different bands.

AU: Yeah, the political incorrectness is where the the humour is.

SZ: That's where the truth is for us. We say shit that you're not supposed to say. That you are not, quote unquote, supposed to say. But for us, like fuck man, fuck you if you're too sensitive. If you can't listen to guys in their mid 50s in spandex talk about their own dicks without being



offended, you don't have to listen.

AU: What is something you don't want your Mother to know?

SZ: Why would I share it if I don't want my Mom to know? She reads everything I do. Don't try to trick me.

AU: Anything else you want to promote before you go?

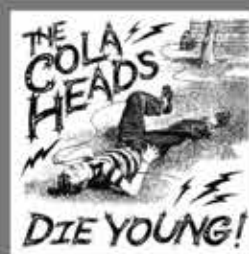
SZ: Look for a big 2021 from Steel Panther and hopefully as soon as we start touring we're going to be out there probably working more than any other band out there.

PHOTO CREDIT: David Jackson
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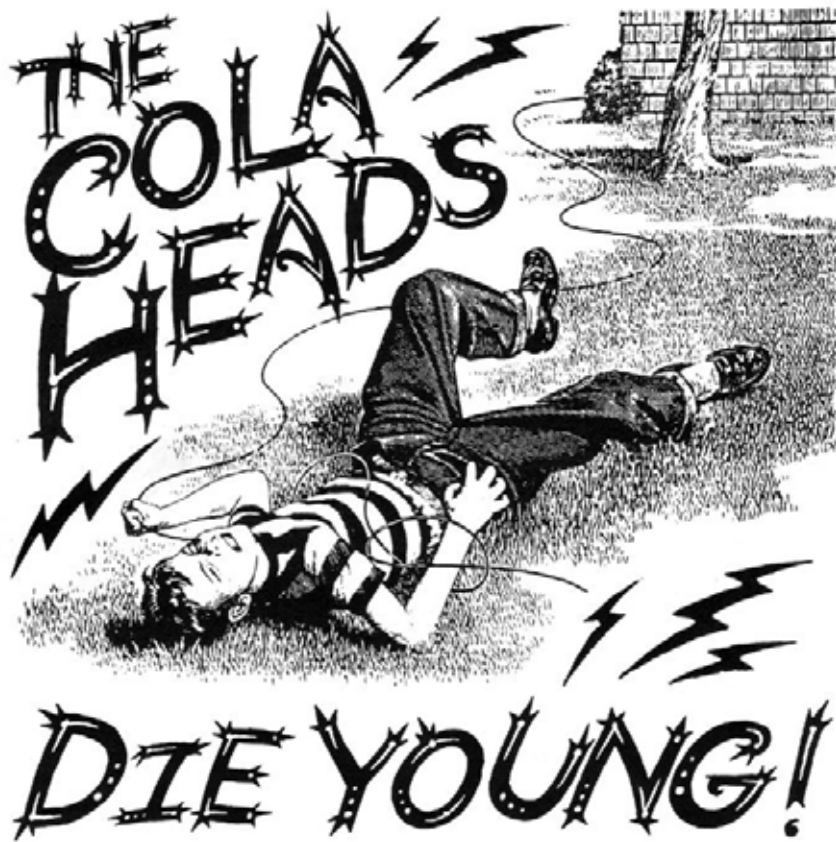
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The Cola Heads

Toronto's The Cola Heads reissue 2017's "Die Young!" on vinyl and digital EP through Cursed Blessings Records.

Formed by tweens Julian Swift and Liam Jaeger in 1997, The Cola Heads gained invaluable experience and local notoriety holding their own on bills with bands like Toronto glam-rock heavyweights The Sinisters and Hamilton punk gods The Vapids. This experience continued to come in handy as the band went on to support

other major acts like Anti-Flag and skate punk icons Pennywise.

The Cola Heads' four-song EP "Die Young!" was originally released in 2017, but has found new life in the hands of the folks at Toronto's upstart punk/metal label Cursed Blessings Records. The label has reissued the album on vinyl and made it available via their "Digital Safety Pin Series" (an online series of EP and LP releases in digital only format).

"They're great people and a great band, it was a perfect fit," said label owner Al Nolan (also vocalist of Canadian punk legends Almighty Trigger

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Happy).

The Cola Heads are actively writing new material and chomping at the bit to get out on the road. A new release is planned for 2021/2022, but for now people can get their fix of this fast, trashy catchy punk at www.cursedblessingsrecords.com.

Other releases in the Digital Safety Pin Series include London Ontario's Hellaphant with their powerpop hit machine "Crumble", Brantford Ontario's Gag Order continue to show you why you love punk rock with "In My Head",



"Reinventing The Safety Pin" a 40+ Band Compilation and original TOHC scenesters Missing Link with their "long lost" never released album *Monolith*.

Future DSPS releases include Australia's Skrewtape and the above mentioned The Sinisters. All DSPS albums are available for \$5 to download and are always FREE to stream at www.cursedblessingsrecords.com/music

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In Memoriam: Marsha Zazula

By Adrenaline PR

Adrenaline PR mourns the loss of a legend in the world of hard rock music, Marsha Zazula, who lost her battle with cancer on Friday, January 10, 2021. Survived by her husband Jon and daughters Danielle, Rikki and Blaire, and five grandchildren, Marsha left an indelible mark on every life she touched.

As co-founder of Megaforce Records, Marsha shattered the glass ceiling in the male-dominated world of Heavy Metal. Also running Crazy Management, Marsha and Jon discovered so many of the hard rock scene's superstars. The label released classic albums from Metallica, Anthrax, Testament, Ministry, Ace Frehley, Disco Biscuits, Kings X and Raven.

Marsha's influence in the Thrash Metal genre is far reaching. Under Marsha's creative direction the genre was born and artists like Metallica, Anthrax, Testament and Overkill were given a platform in which to create their art which then influenced the entire metal community. Without Marsha being an initial patron and advisor to Metallica and Anthrax, the music the world now knows as Heavy Metal would not exist.

Marsha was a galvanizing and calming force in the chaotic music scene and nurtured many careers – musicians and industry pros alike. Their success was her joy – and her joy was shared with all those she met.

Most telling of Marsha's nature are the comments from her friends and family upon her passing. She will be greatly missed!

The family requests those who wish to express sympathy to consider making a donation to Broadway Cares in Marsha's name.

"She was a mother and mentor to many, and a role model as a woman breaking the glass ceiling in an industry run by men. She had balls, beauty, brains and vision." – Jon Zazula via *Variety*

"Marsha Z is the Metal Matriarch of the East Coast. She was our mother when I had none. She made great sacrifices for Metallica to grow. Thank you Marsha. Love and positive energy to the Zazula family." – James Hetfield, Metallica, via Instagram

"Marsha was an incredibly selfless matriarch who had an enormous impact on my life and the lives of countless others... I will forever be grateful to her, Jonny and the entire Megaforce family for taking a chance on a gang of misfits and outsiders like ourselves and for helping connect us to a larger and like-minded audience." – Lars Ulrich, Metallica, via *Variety*

"She kept things balanced. She was this steady hand, a calming force, during these intense moments — and there were intense moments! Jonny and Marsha were really a team; she was there for every decision. Jonny, bless him, was the stereotypical hot-headed, East Coast

label executive — patience and calm may not have been his strong suits — and she balanced him out." – Alex Skolnick, Testament, via *Variety*
"It's with much sadness that we hear of the passing of Marsha Zazula. A true pioneer, along with Jonny Z. Those two were responsible for changing all our lives. Hard to put into words what a world this might be without their belief and dedication to metal and all of us. Our love to her family." – Anthrax, via Facebook

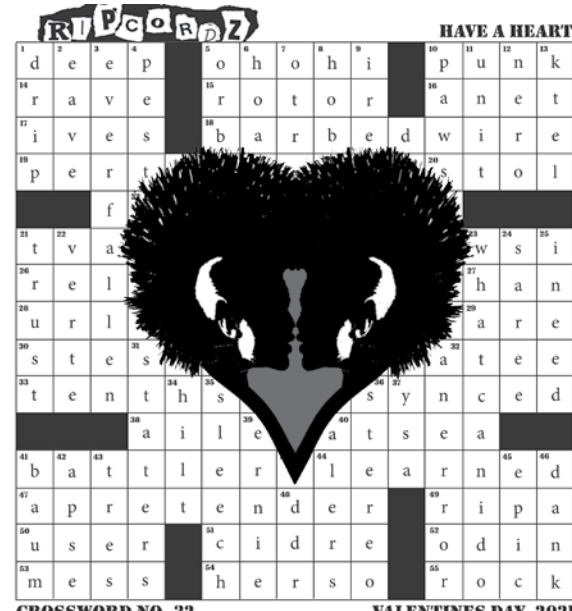
"My life would be very different without her. We worked very closely for the love of Music and Art, we built our relationship on those 2 things. I am saddened to wake up to the news of her passing. My love to the family and the people she touched." – Charlie Benante, Anthrax, via Facebook

"There will no doubt be tributes and outpourings of love from far and wide for this wonderful lady, and rightly so, she was most definitely one of a kind." – Jeff Dunn aka Mantas, Venom/Venom Inc, via Facebook

"Never will you not be near me in my heart Marsha...I love you ..sleep well.." – Tony Dolan, Venom Inc, via Facebook

"There are no words.... Rest In Peace Marsha...." – John Gallagher, Raven, via Facebook

Maria Ferrero met Marsha and Jon Zazula at the age of 15 and the Zazulas channeled her considerable energy into her work with Megaforce / Crazy. "I was their first customer and first employee. They took me in and took a chance on a suburban punk rock girl with no direction," said Maria. "Marsha Zazula had an incredible impact on my life – I am forever grateful to Marsha, Jon and their daughters. Marsha was a wonderful friend who brought out the best in me. In our 40 years of friendship, Marsha welcomed me into her family, guided my career and encouraged me to be my authentic self - like she always was. There is never enough time with those we love – the times we had the good fortune to share were of LEGEND – traveling the world, experiencing culture, appreciating nature and so much more. Every person Marsha met was better for knowing her. I cherish these memories and am incredibly grateful for the time we had. I would not be the woman I am without you!"



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Absolute Underground's Valentine's Day Necrophilia Mixtape

By Dustin Jak

1) Tuff Darts - "She's Dead"

The title says it all in this killer from CBGBs OGs who once featured Robert Gordon in the fold. From their one LP on Sire Records... find this.

4) Alice Cooper - "I Love The Dead"

I remember my mom hated this song, so I caught a lot of shit whenever I played it. Listen to it and see why, fuckers.

5) Misfits - "Hybrid Moments"

A good way to get kicked off social media is write down older Misfits lyrics... fuck this stuff was out there. Could have picked countless others from these fuckin' freaks.

6) VKTMS - "Ballad of Pincushion Smith"

An early SF classic off the first SF Underground Comp EP. The best song about necrophiliac cannibal jail rape... and probably the only song about necrophiliac cannibal jail rape.

stood the test of time. Even the girls sang along to this... don't say you didn't.

3) GBH - "Necrophilia" - "No Remorse... Screw the Corpse"

Perfect for my little 14-year-old ears when I first heard it... a D-Beat classic.

2) T.S.O.L. - "Code Blue"

Probably their most famous song and the encore of their live set still after almost 40 years. This is classic Cali punk that has



7) Nihilistics - "Love and Kisses"

These New York assholes have been pissed off since they started in the late 70s. This song is no exception and raw as hell. Killer old school NYC punk rock... find their stuff now.

8) Slayer - "Necrophiliac"

Probably one of the heavier tracks off the massive *Hell Awaits* LP... but bigger things were just around the corner!

9) Alice Cooper - "Cold Ethyl"

What kind of sick fuck gets two songs on here? The Coop!!! Probably the strongest track of his first solo LP after splitting his band up. Dick Wagner is off the handle on this track!!!

10) Forgotten Rebels - "Fuck Me Dead"

One of the first punk songs I ever heard as a youngster, thanks to my school pal Mike

Denny in Jr High. Still just as awe inspiring all these years later ...The Canadian Punk Band.

11) Slaughter - "F.O.D. (Fuck of Death)"

Once again this is the guitar sound that starts it all... Death Metal and Mayhem before Death Metal or Mayhem. So brutal it's refreshing if that makes sense at all. Get this LP if you like old school thrash.

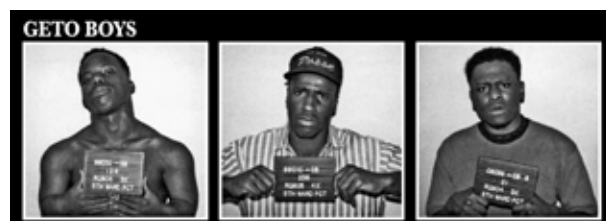
12) Geto Boys - "Mind Of A Lunatic"

"Had sex with her corpse before I left her... and drew my name on the wall like helter skelter" I was seriously shocked the first time I head Bushwick rap that crazy shit... crossing all the lines... not giving a fuck... man we miss him.

13) The Keg Killers - "Resurrection Girl"

A classic about the bride of Frankenstein and keeping a dead woman upstairs in your attic... actually inspired by The Hilarious House of Frightenstein!!

Runner-Up: Cannibal Corpse - Any one of their songs, pick one.



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Mediaslaves

Interview by Ira Hunter

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most famous or infamous for?

JP: Johnny Papan, guitar/vocalist of Mediaslaves. I am definitely not famous.

AU: Give us a brief history of the band, who is

JP: We rehearse in Surrey, BC, but we tell most publications we're from Vancouver. I think the Vancouver scene is sweet, with lots of sick bands that we look up to. Most people we've met are super laid back and just want to help the scene grow which is great to see.

AU: Are any of you involved in any other musical projects?

JP: Yes, Jono also sings and plays guitar in the noise rock band Stutttr. Dude becomes a fuckin' crazy man when he's on stage with that band. That's why we wanted him in Mediaslaves.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

JP: We have two main styles that sort of criss-cross within each other. Some songs are straight-up punk rock whereas others have a bit of a grungy, stoner-metal vibe to them. I usually just tell people we're "heavy punk." Some people call us a hardcore band. Kenny Lush from Daggersmouth said we sound like, "Nirvana's Bleach meets Cancer Bats."

AU: You recently released an album, tell us about it! What can we expect to hear?

JP: Yes, our debut EP, "Fear and Loathing in Outer Space." It's four tracks that range from

the styles listed in the previous question. A mix of punk, hardcore, grunge and stoner metal. We made a D.I.Y. music video for each song that you can watch on YouTube. We contrast our sound with a sort of psychedelic visual style.

AU: Any stand-out tracks you are super stoked about?

JP: Probably the title track, as it's our newest song. It's also got one of the most interesting stories on the record. I wrote it not long after

doing a mix of LSD and magic mushrooms at a music festival (don't try this at home, kids). It was a nightmare in the moment but we got a pretty cool song and music video out of the experience. That same trip also inspired me to start this band in the first place so that's a plus.

AU: Do your songs explore any particular themes or topics?

JP: Most songs are on this record are written about personal experiences and relationships. But we do have some songs we're working on that are more observational in nature. Comments on society, politics, stuff like that. Not necessarily preaching about particular ideas, moreso asking questions about human behaviours and the way things operate.

AU: Describe what your live show will be like once things go back to normal?

JP: Loud and fast for sure. I think that's the case for most bands. Shows are gonna be a gong show when they come back.

AU: How have you been surviving the Apocalypse? Any survival tips to share?

JP: I'm handling it alright, I guess. I'm naturally kind of an introvert so I have no problem being at home for long periods of time. I've been keeping myself busy with the band, promoting our last few tracks, doing all our music videos, trying to grow our listener base, press, that kind of thing. Plus I've been fortunate to be able to work from home as well.

For survival tips, keep in touch with your homies. Try and stay creative or try to learn something new. If you have some kind of idea or project you've always thought about but felt like you never had the time to do anything about it, now is the time.

AU: Any plans for a Covid Valentine's this year?

JP: Haha, not at the moment. Maybe I'll fire up the old Tinder account and find a nice lady who will have lunch with me on Zoom.

AU: Any Covid dating advice? Do's and Don'ts?

JP: Don't make out with anyone who has COVID.

AU: What do you miss most about live music?

JP: Aside from just getting to see live music, I'd say the camaraderie for sure. Talking to strangers, bumping into each other in the pit. Getting beers with your friends before and/or after the show. The energy of a sick performance. I'm missing all of that so much right now.

AU: How did you catch the ear of Fat Mike and what did he do with your song?

JP: Fat Wreck Chords was doing an AIDS Charity Bike Ride thing and they let bands submit their music to the official playlist for a donation. It was a win-win. We have a video on our Instagram of our song "Fleeks and Geeks" playing faintly in the background as Fat Mike munched on nachos or something like that while he was taking a break from his bike ride. It was hilarious.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? Anything else to promote?

JP: Now that the EP is out, we want to head back to the studio and record more tunes as soon as possible. We hope to get a few more songs out this year so feel free to follow us on Instagram - @mediaslavesband - if you'd like to keep up with that. Other than that, our new EP "Fear and Loathing in Outer Space" just dropped so check it out, it's on all the streaming platforms.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

JP: Much love, homie. Thanks for reading.

<https://mediaslaves.net>



in the band and what are you all about?

JP: Me, Sean Tanner (bass) and Jono Delivuk (drums) have been performing together since the end of 2019. Though our music touches on some more serious subjects, we like to joke around and personally don't take ourselves too seriously. Our Instagram is pretty much just a giant self-deprecating meme page.

AU: Where is the band from and what is the music scene like there?

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Healthy Release The effects of masturbation on the endocannabinoid system

By Julia Veintrop

Everyone has an endocannabinoid system and it helps to regulate a lot of the different systems in your body. From the nervous and digestive, endocrine and immune, this system greatly affects many others. It all works through a series of neuroreceptors all over your body and the natural production of proteins that bind to them.

All sorts of things will make our bodies produce endocannabinoids but many of us do not make enough on our own; that's where cannabis can step in. THC and CBD act as phytocannabinoids, filling in the gap when our body doesn't produce enough. These days, research is ramping up, but, one area that has yet to be fully explored is the role this systems can play when it comes to sex.

Everyone wants to know how to make the most of their natural endocannabinoid production and it is my pleasure to pass the information along... If you want to do something that can relieve pain, prevent tumor growth and aid in digestion, go

home and masturbate till you get off.

The study

In 2017, a study was conducted on the effect that masturbating to orgasm had in producing endocannabinoids. Basically, a team of researchers recruited volunteers and took blood samples before and after they got off. The scientists tested their levels of two particular proteins, 2-arachidonoylglycerol (2-AG) and anandamide; curious to see if having an orgasm made

any impact. Essentially, this study was meant to explore the role that the endocannabinoid system had when it came to sexual gratification; they were hoping it would lead to some insight into sexual dysfunction.

The findings

It was concluded that masturbating to orgasm caused a significant production of 2-AG while other cannabinoids were not affected. In fact, they repeated their study and found the same results. From a research perspective, this is an exciting find because it might help us understand what leads to an orgasm on a molecular level.

What this might mean for the average person

They say that 70-75% of women cannot reach an orgasm from intercourse alone and 10-15% can't under any circumstances. Having compassion for all the women out there living this way, it gives me great joy to hear that the medical community is looking into it. I'm even happier to hear that cannabis might hold the key to the big O.

Knowing that our bodies produce this particular protein during an orgasm gives insight. It can provide answers for the medical community looking to understand sexual arousal.

Furthermore, it might help us develop ways to make that happen for those of us who struggle to get there.

2 AG and its effect on the body

In addition to the possibility of a more satisfied society, this study also suggests that masturbation is good for your health. 2 AG is the endocannabinoid most associated with pain relief, proper digestion and tumor growth. So, if you have a medical condition that causes a great deal of pain down there, having an orgasm might help you feel better. An orgasmic release of pain relieving cannabinoids sounds like nature's best medicine; especially when it is backed by science.

If you ever got busted masturbating and felt ashamed of what you were doing, you can now let that go. It turns out, it was healthy for you for more reasons than personal development and body consciousness; masturbating to orgasm stimulates more than your reproductive system. Who knew that the orgasmic reward your body naturally produces and the molecular components of cannabis were so closely related? Thanks to this study, now we know. On top of

that, we can use this information to help people who do not get to enjoy their full quality of life... Taking care of your health never felt this good.

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The author would like to thank and acknowledge the invaluable expertise and help of Dr. Dave Hepburn.

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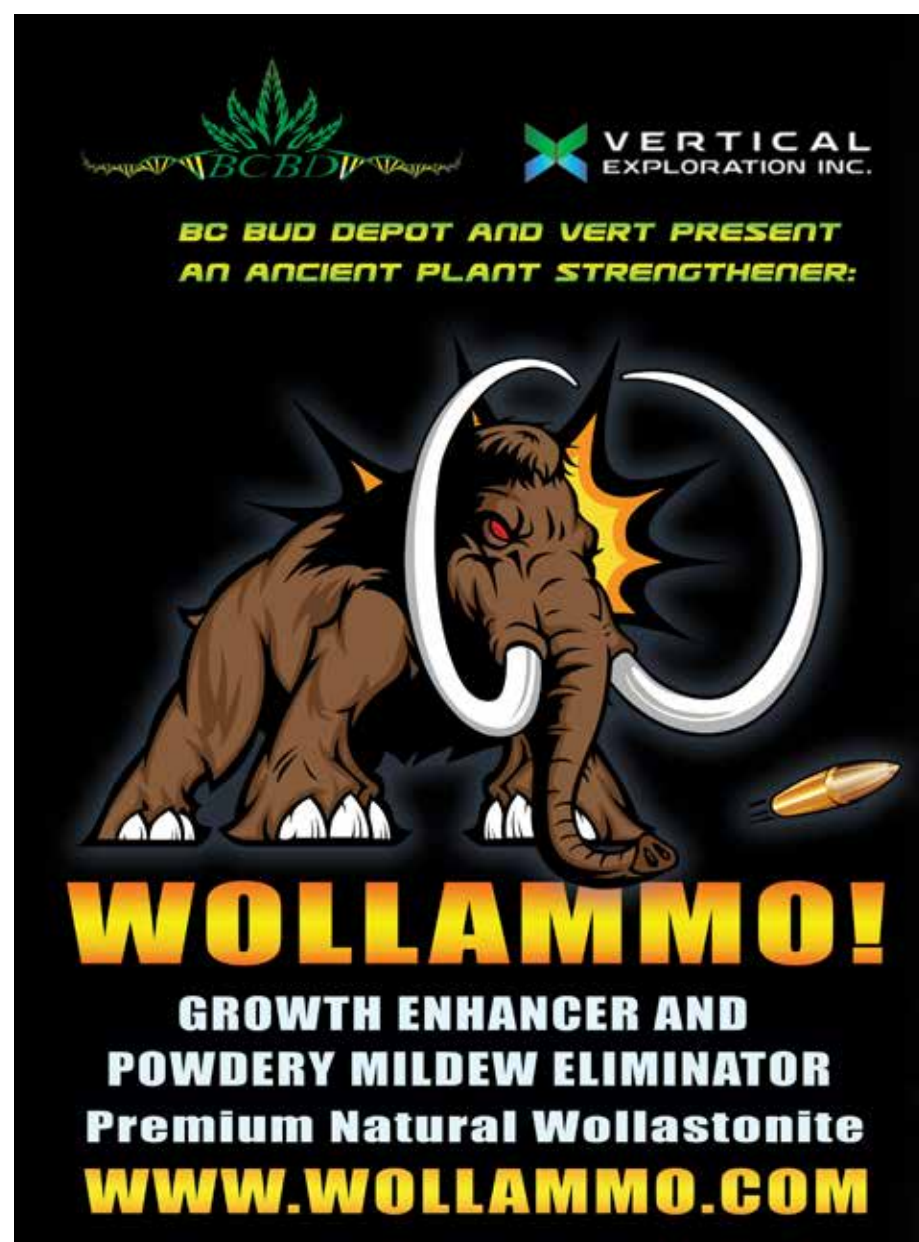
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Satan's Sweet Pickles and Other Surefire Recipes For Hopeless Hearts

Interview by Billy Hopeless

I first met Pickles LaVey back in 2016 when she was the Ivy to my Lux in the mythical band The East Van Traps. Although the bans only seemed to last a day, I've always kept a spot on the curios shelf of my heart for this porcelain pagliaccio that is truly beyond boundaries. So without further ado Ladies, Gentlemen and all, point outside or in between, send in the Pickles!

Absolute Underground: So Pickleypoo, thank you for being my Valentine, we all know that LaVey is the surname of Anton LaVey founder of the Church of Satan but how did you come upon the name Pickles?

Pickles LaVey: hello to you my beautiful hopeless valentine!

So, in the time Pre-Pickles I was deeply inflicted by the burden of fear. I knew in order to create the kind of art and lifestyle I was yearning for I needed to invoke a clown monster and then transfer my consciousness into it. It needed a dose of "Worship Thyself!" hence the Satanism, and a good 1960s ecldysiast name that didn't take itself too seriously!

Pickles was Morey Amsterdams wife, played by Barbra Perry (and later Joan Shawleen) in the *Dick Van Dyke Show*. There was this very dry bit where Ted Harris said, "Pickles" - that's an odd name. I never heard anybody called Pickles before," and she replied, "Yes, it is a strange name, but you see my real name is Fiona, and at my neighborhood everyone named Fiona is called Pickles." Ted Harris says, "Were there many Fionas in your neighborhood?" and she replied, "No...just me," and THAT for some reason was the energy I needed in my burlesque.



AU: Speaking of the devil, you started your own cult, The Sex Clowns 4 Satan. Tell us about your circus coven and how does one get initiated?

PL: Whenever people ask about it, I tell them it is about "fucking clowns and hailing Satan!" But where Satan is a symbol of self worship, and clowning is a tool of self discovery and rebellion. 'Sex Clowns 4 Satan' is about enjoying the splendor of a life

outside of christian-patriarchal values. It is about stepping outside of shame, sexism, gender norms, and the outdated rules that keep us from playing with and experiencing the pleasures of our own bodies (and existence). It is in a similar energy to "Be Gay Do Crimes." When you realize so many of the truths and social norms you were brought up with serve only to keep people small and subordinate, you wonder what other things you can toss into the fire on your way to the clown orgy!

No Initiation! No Gods! No Masters!

AU: Can you make a Balloon Baphomet or are you still at the upside-down cross level of inflated infernal arts ?

PL: Honestly, my friend and co-producer of #ClownsKillEmpires, Mx. Quest, taught me how to make balloon genitals two years ago for an act, and that is about as far as I've gotten. It is like I learned how to make something perfect and beautiful and have just been rolling with it ever since...But I can certainly make genitals that are ALSO upside crosses no problem! Upside down cross genitals are important.

AU: On the subject of torrid talents, you also are a sorcerer of the sideshow arts, such as playing with fire, crystal ball fondling, driving nails into your holes, playing human pin cushion and dancing the hootchie koo. Have I missed anything, and how did you pick up on these eye dropping icebreakers?

PL: That is a pretty accurate summary of my repertoire!

I think a big part of sideshow and circus is constantly experimenting with new skills and ways to push yourself. Sometimes you find yourself working on some horrid/painful stunt at 2am in your home, and you're like, "Wait, what am I doing with my life?" but then you think of how uncomfortable you will make the audience and you persevere for the sake of subversive art, and the long time honored tradition of the sideshow! It's always exciting and challenging to find new

ways of doing old tricks! Spinning bits of your own style and story into everything. I've learned most of my circus skills from years of touring around different cities, and surrounding myself by strange and interesting people (Yourself included!) I'm exceedingly grateful for all of the skills, and wisdom that strangers (and new friends) have bestowed upon me while I was out wandering around trying to find who I was and what I wanted to do.

AU: One of my favourite artistic incarnations you've created is Prawn Waters. Tell us about Prawn Waters and has his namesake the Prince of puke and Pope of trash Mr. John Waters recognized its existence?

PL: I had this confusing period of time where I had just moved to Toronto and was coming to terms with the fact I could no longer pretend that I identified as a woman. All of the closets and secrets were sucking me dry. I was not sure if I identified as a man, but I figured, IF I DID, I would want that man to be John Waters. So I spent an excessive amount of time building this John Waters look and character that I would casually wear around the streets of my new city. It didn't last long! I'm very much not John Waters, and am mostly not a man either. It was a stepping stone to becoming the agender goblin show pony that I am today!

Prawn Waters was a character I joked about making for years. I would tell friends about it, and NOBODY thought it was a good idea! THEY WERE WRONG! And I say, "Here today! Prawn Tomorrow!" Prawn Waters is a Crustacean Cult Filmmaker and Prawnographer, A Trash Cocktail, and the crustiest bus station!

As far as I know The True Prince of Puke does not know of him (YET!). You can check out Prawn Waters on YOUTUBE, INSTA, or TIKTOK

AU: Now my sweet, as you're becoming a dirty household name in the four rings of the L.G.B.T. big top circuit, tell us what the community means to you.

PL: My Burlesque persona helped me to build the confidence it took to come out as a queer and non binary person off stage. I still, however, felt for a long time that I needed to succumb to some weird set of rules and regulations regarding how I looked on stage, and the types of acts I created to please a mainstream audience or else I wouldn't get booked. Over time I realized that authenticity is considerably more captivating than trying to withhold some (relatively) polished shadow. Now I do what I want to! And I am very grateful for all the queer spaces and communities that celebrate the struggle, joy, freakiness and unabashed courage of queer culture!

AU: Well though this dirty little rag does cover all forms of underground fringe art our main

stain is music. So what are yer fave sounds ta bump and grind skip and cartwheel to while yer casting yer spell on the audience or doing housework in only your clown make up?

PL: Y'know, mostly Black Halos!

My top five most played artists of the moment would have to be 1. KimMortal! 2. Orville Peck 3. DeadMoon, 4. The Ink Spots. 5. Big Joanie

AU: Oh my funny Valentine I've been so concentrated on the wonder of you this whole time that I almost forgot that this is our Valentine's day together. If you were to pick out a perfect Valentine card for me and our readers, what would it look like and say?



PL: Ok, so, you receive a mysterious letter at your door. The paper is old and stained, sealed with a balloon dog pressed into snot green wax. You look around to see any sign of a messenger, but there's only a cold and eerie wind, and the feeling that the carnival has finally left town. When you pick it up, it is damp and the weight of it signals that it is important. You break the seal you smell salt water taffy, and you hear the intro notes of Moon River being played by my still beating severed heart. And it's like hey, "Hey! Hey. Hey you! Thanks for being my Valentine, Billy Hopeless!"

You're cool! Here's some pizza!"

AU: Since we're all stuck in Neverland with this Peter Pandemic and unable to fly how are you keeping the dream alive and is there anywhere any curious or faith-full followers can bask in your wonder-full world or support the cause by buying sacrilegious souvenirs?

PL: Yes! I coproduce and perform with #ClownsKillEmpires (digitally) on the third Monday of every month! You can also find me on Youtube, twitter, FB, Insta, and TikTok as Pickles LaVey! And I sell hand printed shirts, prints, and smut on Etsy, under the name SexClowns4Satan!

AU: Well thank you again you've been a most charming, disarming and cool down my heart their five alarming happy Valentinine's day my sweet LaVey. Do you have any last words of love for all us young hearts with groins on fire down here in Absolute Underground land?

PL: Hilly Dopeless! I am so honored to be your out of space and time Valentine! I adore you!

And to all: Don't forget to worship yourself!

Destroy Capitalism!

Be Gay Do Clown!

Tune into the next #ClownsKillEmpires show on February 15th (Info about that is on my social media!) and Keep Planet Earth Weird!

@Pickles.lavey

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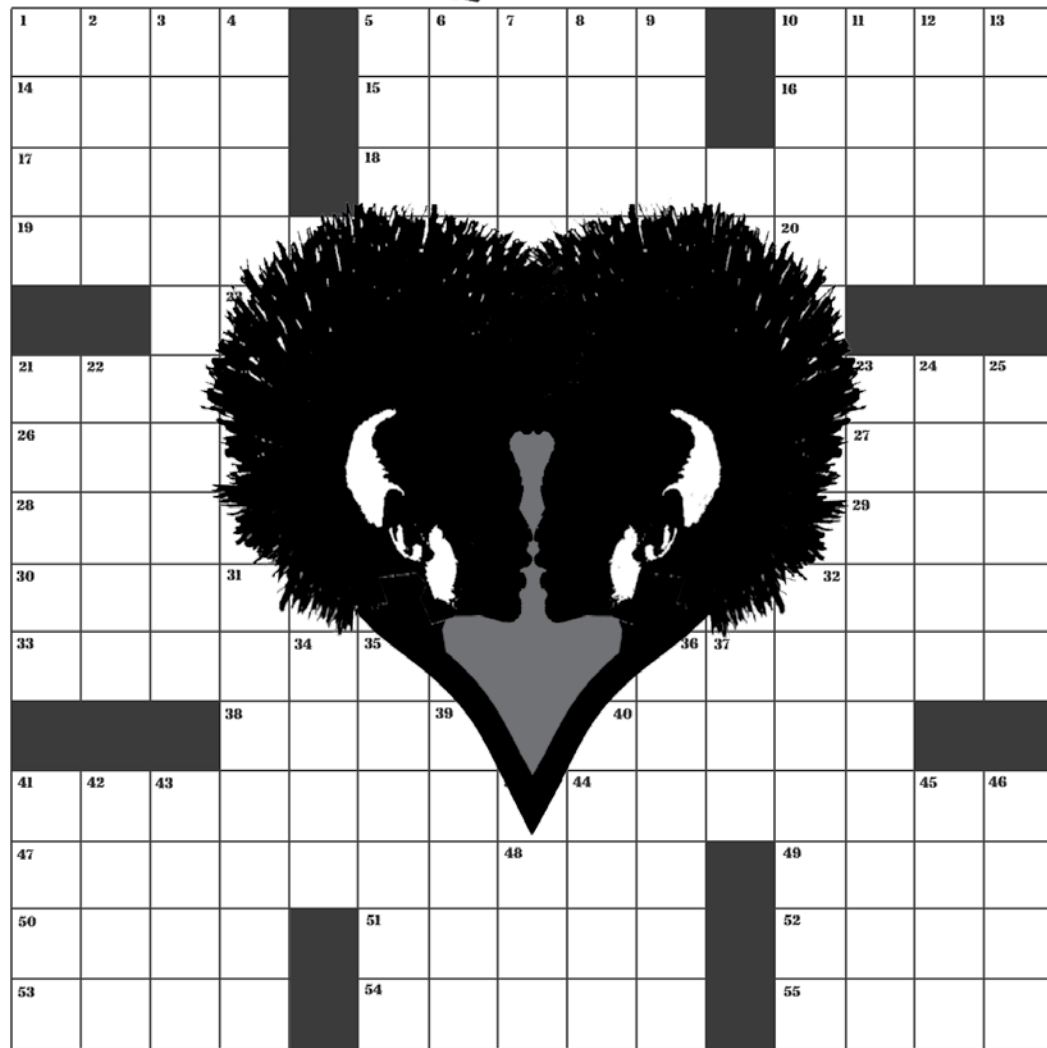
HAVE A HEART

ACROSS

1. SUM 41's "In Too ____"
5. RAMONES (with centrepiece and 54-across)
10. THE CASUALTIES (with 55-across and centrepiece)
14. Dave of Teenage Head
15. Helicopter blade
16. Many daredevils perform without one
17. Burl who narrated "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer"
18. STIFF LITTLE FINGERS (with centrepiece)
19. Attractively cheeky
20. Short runway aircraft
21. Canada's largest French television network
23. Weather app from IBM
26. Islam or Shinto (abbr.)
27. Solo
28. Web address
29. "We ____ All We Have"
30. Québec has lots of them (abbr.)
32. To ____
33. First after a decimal
36. Harmonized
38. ____ de poulet
40. Confused
41. Fighter
44. Wise
47. SHATTERED HEARTS "I'm ____"
49. TV host Kelly
50. One typing in a 28-across
51. Alcoholic beverage made at some Quebec apple orchards
52. The Allfather
53. X "The world's a ____"
54. See 5-across
55. See 10-across

DOWN

1. Icicles may do this
2. Where 1-down may happen
3. BUZZCOCKS (with 'in' and the centrepiece)
4. Bug
5. Planet, for example



CROSSWORD NO. 32

VALENTINE'S DAY, 2021

6. They run gated communities (abbr.)
7. Messaging encryption (abbr.)
8. Large goblin
9. Anger
10. Animal feet
11. Brand New ____
12. Roman fiddler
13. Canadian infomercial company
21. 7 SECONDS
22. La Route ____ (longest bicycle path in North America)
23. BUZZCOCKS
24. Indian wrap (var.)
25. STOOGES "____ Somebody"
31. Avowers
32. You can have one in judgement or on the field
34. The grip of a sword
35. Muddy stretch along the shore
36. Death By ____
37. Actress Penarejo
39. Bert's friend
40. Mariners and Brewers
41. Author of "The Wonderful Wizard of OZ"
42. Church recess
43. Very (Fr.)
45. Long poem
46. Adjective often paired with dark
48. Arcade dance game (abbr.)





Daemon Grey

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking to and what are you most infamous for?

DG: What is up everybody? It is Daemon Grey here tuning in. I just released my debut record titled *Follow Your Nightmares*. Check it out!

AU: Give us a brief history and the mission statement of your band.

DG: The mission statement of Daemon Grey is to inspire fearlessness by creating and performing music powered by the soul.

AU: Describe the band's sound if possible.

DG: Sexy, gothy, heavy, sinister, energetic, catchy, industrial, soul-powered

AU: Have you released an album recently? Tell us about it! What can we expect to hear?

DG: My debut record *Follow Your Nightmares* was released January 2020. The record was made over several years covering a lot of different emotions and vibes and points in my life. I write the songs from an authentic place and I hope that comes through in the music. The record itself is kind of like 11 unique singles that flow together to form an album. I wrote the album with Gavin Brown (Three Days Grace, Billy Talent), Mike Riley (Marilyn Manson), and Kevin Thrasher (Escape the Fate).

AU: Does the new album explore any particular themes or topics?

DG: The album explores themes of power, horror, drugs, aggression, sex, sexual energy, brotherhood and sisterhood, anxiety and anxiety release, isolation and the strength of our own spirit

AU: Any stand-out tracks you are stoked on?

DG: All the songs tell their own story so I am stoked on them all.

AU: What's your most recent video you released?

DG: "Isolated" is the latest video. You can find it on YouTube.

AU: What is the attitude your bring to your music?

DG: I bring a lot of different attitudes to my music, but overall, the main attitude is fearlessness and always expressing your authentic self and never, ever feeling bad about who you want to be and what the fuck you want to say.

AU: Are your songs anthems for a new generation of degenerates?

DG: I would say the song "Scream" is an anthem for anyone that might be suffering from anxiety, depression or anything like that. I would say the song brings a healthy dose of aggression therapy.

AU: How have you been surviving the Apocalypse? Any survival tips to share?

DG: Well, that's a really good question. In terms of survival tips, yes I actually do. I would say definitely it's important to practice your baseline striking skills to ensure you have solid punching and kicking and wrestling skills. We are animals and we all need some basic fighting skills. From there, I would definitely advise protecting yourself with gear that you can get from any survival shop.

Of course, it's critical that we all build our own immune system and do not rely on mainstream medicine for health reasons as it cannot fucking be trusted as we have clearly seen with what's going on. My main advice is to think for yourself and follow your heart and do not fall for the mainstream propaganda brainwashing that is being propagated

on humanity. Think twice about consuming anything the government tells you to consume.

We are being bred to live in fear. When we choose not to live in fear, none of these low frequencies manipulated forces can affect us. To further improve the immune system I recommend breath work, cold therapy, and a long fast (3-5 days) at least a couple times a year.

Finally, it's important to not get dragged down into any low frequency drama or victim mindset. I think a really good practice is to wake up in the morning and write down on a piece of paper the mission of your life. You write it down every single morning and see how it adapts and changes over time. This way, you keep a big picture view of your purpose in life and don't get sucked into the brainless monkey business happening all around us.

AU: Any plans for Valentine's Day this year?

DG: Probably find a beautiful, wholesome lady that giggles a lot and is creative and good vibes only but also can fuck with a horror movie from time to time. It's all about balance right? I'd probably get her a black rose and sing her some love songs and whisper sweet nothings in her ear. Hell, I should probably get some roses to be safe. Either that or I'll just have a date night with my cat Mystic.

AU: What does it currently say on your Tinder profile?

DG: Haha! I can tell you my secrets but then I'd have to kill you. Just kidding, I've never had a ton of success on Tinder because I think most girls probably think I'm insane. Don't get me

wrong I do like the crazies but too much crazy can be a bit much right? Ummmm. To be honest I deleted Tinder several years ago and I only occasionally jump back on to throw up some cat pics and break a couple hearts. Okay HONESTLY though, I'm not really into wasting time on my phone or apps. I'm into writing and creating authentic art that comes from my soul because I'm trying to make good use of my life. When you create your own vibe, beautiful people come to you naturally without even trying.

If I was though, I would just be swiping right on girls that aren't afraid to show their face in public and live their goddamn life. Too many people right now are cowering in fear and it's so unattractive.

AU: What do you miss most about live music?

DG: Virtual shows really do not do it for me. Live music is all about sharing energy in the moment and feeding off the energy of the people in the audience. Live music with an audience puts me into a flow state where I don't need to think about what I'm saying at all... I can just breathe and exist and be myself. So, I do look forward to doing that again.

AU: What should we know about you that we don't already? Anything else to promote?

DG: Well I am looking for an additional guitar player to join the band so I definitely want to throw that out there. Shoot me a message on Instagram to connect! And I might as well put this out into the universe... anyone looking to make a horror movie I have a good idea I've been sitting on for a while. Or, if you are looking to take a chance on your new male lead, holla at cha boi.

AU: Any final words for our



readers?

DG: I would just say always go after anything that scares you. Follow Your Nightmares to find your purpose and connect with your heart. Trust that both good experiences and tough experiences are equally valuable in your life and in the evolution of your soul. Trust that after you die you will live on and thus do not fear death. I would say fuck the system, fuck the status quo, kill your fear and live from your heart today, tomorrow, and always.

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JC Townsend

Interview by AU Editorial

Absolute Underground: Who are we talking with and what are you most infamous for?

JT: Hey AU, this is JC (Jay) Townsend. I guess I would be most infamous for my DIY ethos. I have been designing and screen printing my own (band/gig) shirts in my living room for years. There was also a time that I hand stapled and distributed 1000 copies of my DIY punk/metal/hardcore (Rek) Magazine (#1) that I created from nothing in 2005. But that's another story... I am always learning and trying new creative things.

AU: Give us a brief history of your music. Along with your solo project, what other bands are you a part of?

JT: I have been performing in music since I was very young. I sang and toured in a choir at age 9; playing my first crossover show opening for Beyond Possession in Calgary at the age of 16 (what an honour that was). Since then, I have played in numerous punk, metal, hardcore bands; most recently as the vocalist for Press On (Rain City Hardcore) and Drown in Ashes (RIP). The solo acoustic thing basically came out of nowhere. When the world suddenly stopped last March, I had to do something creative. So, I (literally) dusted off the acoustic guitar and started playing it again. In all honesty, I don't think this acoustic thing would have happened without the shutdown. Press On had just dropped our EP "Withdrawal" and we had some shows booked in BC and AB. Our first show scheduled for March 26 th at CBDs, and everything else, was suddenly cancelled.

Press On remains on Covid19 hiatus. I can't wait to start screaming angry/inspired words again. AU: This past year has been a harrowing one for musical artists across the globe, but somehow you have managed to put out two releases, as well as some videos? What can you

tell us about them? What was your experience releasing and promoting music during a pandemic?

JT: The shutdown has been a huge gamechanger for me (and everyone). One minute I/we are living our lives, jamming, and getting stoked for the first of many shows, the next minute I am isolated, confused, and nervous. After a week or two of looking at the walls I started heading into the jam space and banging around on the acoustic; if anything, it was to maintain some level of normalcy and sanity. I revisited some older acoustic cover songs that I love (Defeater, Pink Floyd, Sinead O'Connor, Thrice), and got inspired to write some originals. I had the song "Angel" from 2019; I wrote and released it for my mom, after she passed away. She always wanted me to sing (like I did as a kid in the choir) again, but I never did while she was alive (sorry mom). I got to tinkering around with Garageband, bought a decent mic, and hit record. That's how "Solitary (covid-covers) and GhOStS came to life; on the fly and in the moment. I did not have a preconceived plan to do the releases, or any of it; things just spilled out and started to snowball. GhOStS was released in June, and Solitary in August. I actually recorded the cover songs first because I didn't have much for originals and I had to learn how to record and get comfortable again with the six-string. Aside from mastering (with Railtown Mastering), the recordings were completely DIY. They turned out pretty decent. GhOStS is a heavy record for me, with lots of lived experience in those words and song structure ("Save Me from Myself," "Diamond Days," etc.). I released both EPs on limited run 10-inch vinyl and cassette. I am having a great time with it. It



sucks not having three other people to collaborate and split costs with, but doing my own thing has been a really great experience so far. I am also getting to know artists, promoters, and venues in a genre that I am new to, and very unfamiliar with. The video for the song "GhOStS" came later (Dec 2020). It was super fun and quick to pull together. It all ties into your question about releasing records during a pandemic. It has been a very interesting (and eye opening) experience promoting music with no live shows to look forward to, and/or promote the releases through. I live to play live (always have). Unfortunately, I have had to cancel three solo shows during the pandemic, I kept hoping things would get better but they didn't. So, it really became about promoting streaming and band related online platforms, via social media. It's been a super huge learning curve; that's where the idea/need for a video came from. It seems to be about content creation and consistency with social media right now (if you are into that sort of thing). I released and promoted the "GhOStS"

video to prop up the 2020 releases and am super stoked how it turned out. I will not be releasing my next record while the pandemic is a thing. I will drop a single (or two) and a video; I am also due for an album release show (or three), and need to be patient (which is very hard for me). It is a love/hate thing with online promotion and the new era of music consumption, for me. I really struggle with it sometimes (this past year has been very enlightening) and I think back fondly to the days of mix tapes, hall shows, and spending my allowance on smokes and the latest Celtic Frost, SNFU, Boneless Ones, and Corrosion of Conformity vinyl. Music just felt more organic and personal; you had to look (and work) for it; staking your pre social media claim as a punk, skater, headbanger, jock, goth, etc (those were the days). In the current world of instant gratification and limitless access, there are so many artists hoping to reach a new listener base (which is great). While I love jumping down the various listener path wormholes, and discovering new music, there is double edge sword to it. I am not sure how healthy it is for the artists (mental, financial and social) wellbeing, and the music industry as a whole. I am not complaining, I completely understand things have changed for better, and the worse.

AU: What drives your work, musically or thematically? What can we expect to hear on these two 2020 releases?

JT: As always (Drown in Ashes, Press On, and now JC Townsend), I write from my life experiences (past and present) and observations. Things like addiction, mental health, and perseverance are always themes that are embed in my art. The songs are raw and a starting point, both vocally and acoustically for me. "Solitary" is a collection of covers that have meant a lot to me for a very long time; the acapella Rise Against cover was particularly fun. They are basically songs that span and remind me of various points in my life.

AU: You're set to re-enter the studio this Feb/ March to record a new album, Bonefires, tell us about it! What themes or topics will the new album explore, and how will it differ musically from your past releases?

JT: I am stoked to get in and record Bonefires. The last 9 months are sort of a blur and now I can focus on recording material I started to work on in August. The themes for this record are pretty consistent with the GhOStS and my heavier project(s); loss, addiction/recovery, trauma and relationships. I keep trying to write lyrics that are lighter/happier, but I always end up pouring out words that are heavier and deeper in nature. I am happy guy who writes sad/dark songs... If I have to work too hard (or struggle) to tell the story, it doesn't feel natural or honest. With song titles such as "Hero (spread your wings)", "An Only Son", "Breathe and Dive", I am staying true to form. I think that my song writing is getting stronger, which will show on this record. There will be fewer vocal harmonies and more of a stripped-down/ raw feel. I feel that I have developed my own alt-acoustic sound over the past 9 months, that I am proud of. Recording music that can translate live is important, and something I need to keep in mind while demoing and getting ready for the studio. Things just have a way of creating themselves (in the moment) when I am writing/

recording; songs usually come out more complex, textured, and wider that I thought they would when I started the session. I am working on having more control over that side of my artistry (or should I? that's the question). However, I think that harmonies will become a sort of signature for my recorded works, and I will continue to include them in my writing, as the songs allow.

People have compared the songs on GhOStS to the works of Elliott Smith and Simon and Garfunkel, which is certainly esteemed company to be in. Going into the studio will also make this next recording sound bigger and more polished.

AU: Since this is our Covid Black Valentines issue, do you have any pandemic-specific dating advice for our readers?

JT: Full body condoms are a thing, right? AU: What's next for JC Townsend as an artist? Will you be hitting the stage as soon as Covid finally fucks off?

JT: I am going to get this next record done, work to make some solid connections in the realm of promotion and management, wait (not so) patiently for shows to start again and hopefully get loud my brothers in Press On, sooner than later. I can't wait to hit that stage again. Now I will get to do it in two very different ways. Singing and screaming about heavy stuff. Life will be good... I would love to do some touring as well.

AU: What do you do when you're not making music?

JT: Honoured to get to journey with my teenage son and amazing partner. I am a bit obsessed with fitness right now, and am always looking for the next Netflix show to binge watch with the family. I live a quiet and rewarding life with family and close friends.

AU: What else should we know about JC Townsend that we don't already?

JT: I have been working alongside people with developmental disabilities and mental health concerns for the past 20 years. Giving back to the community is something I will always be grateful for. I have learned so much about myself, and my community, through the people I have walked with.

AU: Any final words for our readers?

I will never forget hearing the Rollins Band song "Do It" for the first time and how it shaped/ steered my life. Do shit that inspires you! Do things that challenge and teach you! Do things that make you happy! Do things with, and give your time and energy to, people that give a shit about you. Live a life on your terms and don't compromise your values, or what you believe in for anyone. A year ago, if you asked if I would be a solo alternative acoustic recording artist, I would have likely shrugged my shoulders with a blank stare, or laughed. I am really happy and fulfilled by doing it. I made the decision to commit to it, put in the work, challenge myself to step outside the box and become vulnerable and honest. If anything, the pandemic has shown me that we have to keep moving ahead (Pressing On, so to speak), and look within ourselves. I remain optimistic, and am very eager to see where this all leads...

www.jctownsendmusic.com PHOTO CREDIT: Milton Stille

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Midnight Gallows Digs Into Those Slow, Heavy Grooves

By Dustin Wiebe

Meeting at the nexus of sludge, death metal and rock n roll, you wouldn't expect that Midnight Gallows' huge sound is made with just two people. Guitarist/ vocalist Jason Thiry and drummer Mitch Rogers both hail from Regina, Saskatchewan, born out of the ashes of punk rock n rollers Royal Red Brigade. When asked what brought on this new direction, they explained that, "We've always thrown around the idea of doing a slower and heavier style band like this." Falling into the spells of Uncle Acid & The Deadbeats and Graveyard in close proximity of Dead Quiet melting their faces live awoke something within them.

In late 2016 they started gathering with an agenda. Thiry told of how they would "hang around the jam spot, try to hook everything up at once to my guitar, as one does. When there's only two members, you gotta fill it in somehow." This experimentation quickly resulted in "Burn in the Sun", a sludgy trudge that set the tone for their sound.

Shortly after that they were offered a slot opening up for Dead Quiet and went to work writing enough material for a set. They'd write songs by "riffing back and forth until we beat the idea into submission," and it shows. The songs are punishing while still being playful.

What it boils down to is that this is two best friends having the time of their lives collaborating. Rogers points out, "We've been playing together (in various bands) since the 90s. We work really well together, both writing and live. We can live in a van for 40 days together and still be the best pals ever, which is pretty important to me." Watching them play live, it's easy to see and hear the connection they share. They ostensibly vibe off of each other while playing.

In 2019 they started recording with emerging local studio wizard Chris Dimas. They described the experience as, "Incredible. The guy has an ear for music, whether it be playing, writing or recording. And his ideas were welcomed. He makes you feel comfortable."

The *Attack Warning Red* album art was also done by Jason Thiry. He's an active graphic designer in the community, having done work for Black Thunder, Rebuild/Repair, and Planet Eater, to name a few.

Midnight Gallows released *Attack Warning Red* in the summer of 2020. A menacing melange of feedback opens the album, establishing a theme that runs throughout. The aforementioned opener "Burn in the Sun" closes with a sample from an old British bomb warning that cautions repeatedly, "Attack Warning Red," appropriately

carrying a doomed sense of urgency. "Raise The Alarm" is a galloping death n roll number that offers brief reprieve dropping into a gnarly groove that will satisfy anyone who worships at the altar of the riff. The second side of the record opens with "Leviathan", a moody, almost post rock track accompanied with spoken word that departs from the riffing of the album and merges influences from Mogwai, Appleseed Cast and Sleep.

With live music looking grim for the foreseeable future, Midnight Gallows are going to try their hand at burning through a "gigantic single

REGINA RAGE

track record" in the tradition of Bell Witch. Their bandcamp page has *Attack Warning Red* on vinyl and streaming. It's also streaming on all the usual platforms. They're hungry to play these songs live once it's safe to do so. Give the album a spin and you'll see why.

midnightgallows.bandcamp.com


PHOTO CREDIT: Jason Thiry

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Pre Teen Thunder Queens!

By Billy Hopeless

As a writer and music lover I acknowledge the elder gods, as well as try to keep up with the fresh batch of deities and demi-gods... and what's fresher than the ten- and eleven-year-old princesses of power known as Thunder Queens from London Ontario?!

Heres my rock and roll love letter to you part two, as I introduce you to the young rock goddesses Lola (drums) and Violet (guitar) who united to flash and crash as the mighty Thunder Queens!

Absolute Underground: Oh mighty Thunder Queens, thank you for your presence and happy Hopeless Valentine's day! Let's get better acquainted. Do you have cool punk rock

last names yet? If not, give each other one now!

Violet: Lola Lightning Bolt!

Lola: Violet Flying V!

AU: What is your origin story? Did you two meet and form this dynamic duo of dischord one day when lightning struck your elementary school monkey bars and Pow! Zap! Kaboom! Thunder Queens were ready to rock? Or was it a whole different amazing tale of divine creation?

Thunder Queens: We met an event called "Punk Rock Flea Market" at Call The Office. We both realized that we were both going to the same summer camp called Girls Rock Camp. At the camp we both ended up in the same band called Larva. Soon after, we realized we liked playing music together, and formed our own band, Thunder Queens!

AU: Well you're way ahead of the game, having your first vinyl release out at the ages of 10

HOPELESSLY DEVOTED TO YOU

and 11. Speaking of which, we have something in common besides cool punk last names and super rock and roll powers. My band's first vinyl release, just like yours, was put out by the Lord of London Mr. Tony Lima. How did you meet the Limanimal and how hard did he have beg you to be part of his Yeah Right Records menagerie? Oh and please describe him to us in your own words.

Violet: When I was about seven years old, I started to go to Call the Office shows and Tony let me meet bands like Gob, Limblifter, Public Animal, Jeff Rosenstock, the Melvins, etc. Soon after Tony let me throw my ninth birthday party at CTO, funny thing, I didn't ask, but he painted over all the bad words in the bathrooms so my friends wouldn't be freaked out, haha. I met Lola at Punk Rock Flea Market, which was also at Call the Office. Soon after, me and Lola were recording at the Sugar Shack and made a post about it on Instagram. Tony must have seen the post and immediately asked if we wanted to put It out on Yeah Right! We of course said yes. If I was to describe Tony... he would be the strong silent type but when you talk to him he can be really nice and helpful. He's awesome.

Lola: We met him also at Punk Rock Flea Market. And when there were shows that we went to, he would get us the best seats. Last year, while we were recording our songs for the first time, he asks one of our parents if we wanted to make a 7" record! So we said yes, and used the songs we recorded to make the record. He has always been really nice, and we are so thrilled that he made a record with us.

AU: Before Covid Cupid Hit our world with its pandemic arrow, you were scheduled to play a gig with those heartfelt codgers known as the Black Halos. How were you planning on blowing them off the stage, are you fans of the band? Don't worry, I won't tell them of your genius strategy.

Violet: I was thinking of doing some cool rock kicks, tell some funny jokes, and speaking of that, I just got a new pedal for my birthday and I was going to use, it's a looping pedal and I was going to do awesome layers of cool riffs, and solos. That's what I was going to do. It would have been cool to play a bowling alley with The Black Halos, and bowling together after the show would have been fun.

Lola: Before we were going to have a show with you, I didn't really know who you guys were, but my dad saw you guys play 20 years ago, and has some cool photos of you and your band.

AU: Speaking of love and war, who are your influences and pre-teen dream teams that currently rock yer world? Do you have any pictures of musicians other than yourselves on your bedroom walls?

Violet: My influences are probably Juice Newton, REM, David Bowie, Joan Jett, Linda Ronstadt, The Ramones, The Bangles, The Cars, and Tiffany.

Lola: My influences are Foo Fighters, Soundgarden, Heart, and Queen.

AU: As a lyricist I've noticed you tend to go the minimalistic route with your songs. Why do you choose this form of simplistic expression?

Violet: With some of our latest songs that aren't on the 7", like "Fighter," "Walking Away," "Cymbals," and "Jumping Around," we started to be more creative of our lyrics. We are really becoming better song writers and we are expanding on our lyrics with each new song. We wrote the first EP when we were 9 and 10, so the lyrics reflect that, I think.

Lola: I think going the minimalistic route with songs, you can have more fun with it melodically. But like Violet said, we are becoming better song writers every time.

AU: Well I've got you on the subject of subjection tell us about this stereo cat you sing of on the song aptly entitled "Stereo Cat." Do

you think cats are more audio inclined than dogs? My best friend Bean wants to know!

Violet: I feel like if a cat made a song it would probably be better than a dog because cats can purr and they can meow. They can clap their little paws, they can growl, if my cat released an album I would buy it.

Lola: Disagree with Violet, I think dogs would be better. Because, dogs can howl louder than cats can meow, and dogs can growl just as well as cats,



if not better.

AU: Back to minimalistic musical magic. You are a two piece at the moment but are there any plans of adding more Thunder Queens, or is it the less members more soda pop tickets, and less watts ta split the spoils gambit you're running here?

Violet: Lola and I work really well as a two-piece. We write songs quickly and get along well. But sometimes feel a bass player would allow me to have more room to solo while keeping the rhythm going. A looping pedal will help with that, too. We are open to it, just hard to find other kids that are serious about joining a band.

AU: I'm sure it's easier in the long run, they always give us six pop tickets for a five-member group. So what's on your backstage rider and if you could have anything waiting for you when you enter your pre and after show sanctuary, what would you desire to appease the Thunder Queens?

Violet: If I could have anything backstage it would be a small room for cats, and a buffet. Dessert buffet, dinner buffet, lunch buffet, breakfast buffet, like all buffets, especially dessert. And I would also want a room full of cats and dogs, hamsters, ferrets, so much and other stuff, so I could play with all of them. All of this would be really fun.

Lola: I would be sitting with Violet with all those buffets.

AU: What would a Thunder Queens Valentine's Day card look like, and what would it say?

TQ: Thunder Queen Valentines Card would be black with a red heart and a lighting bolt, and a red heart would say, "Let's make your Valentine's Day rock with the Thunder Queens."

AU: Well thank you Thunder Queens for

gracing us with your time and rock and roll! Before we say adieu, tell us what's striking on the horizon for your unstoppable energy. Have you been using this tragic time to write new music and plan your next flash show? Oh, and leave us with your battle cry or personal mantra of the Thunder Queens!

Violet: Yes, we have been doing some writing, when we play another show I hope people are excited to hear them. I've been doing some cool things with are my loop pedal and adding solos and I think Lola has been doing some cool things with the drums and even cello and keyboard, so when we combine our instruments together it'll make a whole mush of good music. No, it'll blow everyone's minds! I just wanted to say thank you for interviewing us and it was really fun... our battle cry. Hmm, By the Power of Thunder Queens! We have the power, haha... I don't know?

@thunderqueensband

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Top Graphic Novel Picks to Read for Early 2021

By Ed Sum

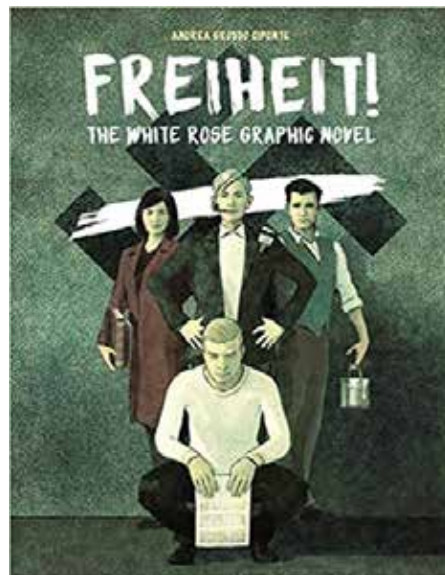
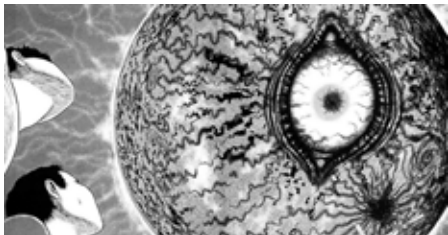
Finding some great graphic novels to read during the cold winter season can be tough. The following are my picks of must reads, to get even more chills on. Superhero type works are a dime a dozen, and I offer this list instead:

Hellstar Remina

Viz Media - Now Available

While we worry if there's a Planet X and the chaos it can cause should it ever appear, Junji Ito has elevated the fear-mongering to his own level. Some readers have argued that he's the spiritual successor to H.P. Lovecraft. This particular book was originally published in Japan in 2005, and is now finally available in English for readers worldwide to enjoy!

A planet has materialized, coming out of a wormhole of all places, and it's named Remina—the daughter of the Dr. Oguro who discovered it. And there's a problem: it's on a collision course to Earth. Nobody's safe, and what can the girl do to stop it? Or could there be another reason why it's attracted to the blue and white marbled world?



Freiheit! The White Rose Graphic Novel

Plough Publishing House

February 16, 2021

Resistance is not futile and a group of students in Nazi Germany do not believe the Reich is right. They formed the White Rose, a resistance movement to change the tides of opinion about who is best to govern this country. This dramatic tale is more about the group of kids whose fate are sealed. Anyone who's studied German History knows their fate, and this work shows how they need to be remembered as heroes in this very stylish look back at history. The details are exquisite, and the visual tone is a piece of old cinema. The rustic flavour of the art is pure gold!

Andrea Grosso Ciponte hits all the right notes here in this story, and he's no stranger to biographies presented in graphic novel format. He's best known for *Renegade: Martin Luther, The Graphic Biography*.

Hellboy Universe: The Secret Histories

Dark Horse Comics

June 15, 2021

Fans of Mignolaverse have this collection of standalone stories now collected into one Grand Ole Opry! Technically, it's a hardcover book, with 436 pages of story about this universe's best-known villains, antiheroes and everything else this creator can think of, like:

When did Rasputin find his calling to bring about Ragnarok? How did the Visitor stay hidden on Earth for so long? And where did the legendary



Sledgehammer armor really come from? These questions and more are answered in this new collection from the world of Hellboy! Three stories of instrumental side characters are explored in

full, collected for the first time in a handsome hardcover perfect for any Hellboy fan's library.

Rob

Legendary Comics

Feb 3, 2021 (available through the WEBTOON app)

There's a new hero in town, and his name is Rob. Inspired by the Robin Hood legends of yore, this



new character lives in a "renaissance-punk" world far in the future where the Earth's resources have been plundered.

From the official press release:

Bows and arrows collide with scavenged modern technology. To protect his home country of Albion from the devious French Gauls and their invasion plans, Rob, his mentor Sir Dido and her niece, the trainee druid Blondel, embark on a perilous sabotage mission across the English Channel. When this goes horribly wrong and Sir Dido is injured, Rob is forced to take matters into his own hands and risk everything on a quest across his broken and bizarre world to seek a fabled weapon, The Spear of Destiny, which may not even exist.

For more pop culture musings and other comic book shenanigans, please follow @Edohotep on Twitter or visit otakunoculture.com

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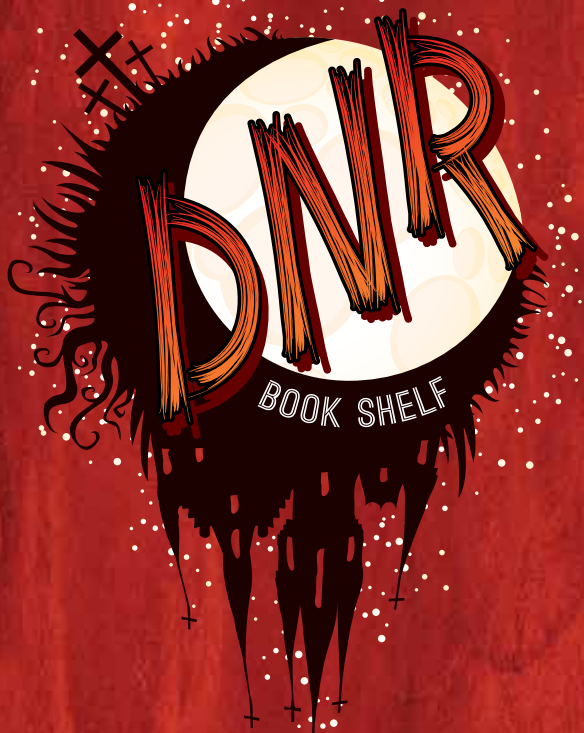
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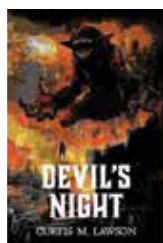
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DEVILS NIGHT



Curtis M Lawson
Weird House Press,
October 30th, 2020

This novel is a collection of short stories that focus on the theme of Devil's Night as it occurred in Detroit, Michigan, from the 1960s through to the 1990s.

This was my second time reading this anthology as I had received an Advance Reader's Copy of it back in February of this year.

In this anthology we take a look at the vandalism and arson that encompassed the city every year on this night. We also take a look at some of the urban legends from the area, such as the Nain Rouge, a legendary creature whose appearance is said to bring on misfortune.

This is a book that is heavy on the feels. There is a great deal of social commentary to be said about what life in Detroit really must have been like during this time period. From black children being gunned down by police to white children whose parents were dealing with severe addiction problems, to what the personal lives of police officers must have been who refused to move out of the city and head for safer grounds.

It's crazy for me to read it again now in November of 2020 and to actually think of all of the crazy things that have happened since I last turned these pages. Needless to say, this is a book that will stick with you. It's evoked the same powerful emotions in me that I experienced with my first reading. And I will most likely pick this up again sometime in the future.

Michael Cushing

THE NEW ANNOTATED H.P. LOVECRAFT: BEYOND ARKHAM

[NEW ANNOTATED LOVECRAFT #2]



H.P. Lovecraft, Leslie S. Klinger, Victor LaValle
Liveright,
September 24th 2019

This volume is an absolutely gorgeous literary keepsake textbook from Liveright

that any Lovecraft fan would be happy to own. This is the second volume with 25 stories, compared to the first volume (released in 2014) with 22 of Lovecraft's original stories and we still have choice selections such as the infamous "The Rats in the Walls," "The Lurking Fear," "From Beyond," "The Tomb," "The Terrible Old Man," and many more.

It's clear that this book was put together with brilliance; even the idea of doing an annotated collection of anyone is amazing in itself. There are massive collections of these, everyone from The Brothers Grimm to Dracula, Frankenstein and everyone in between - they make excellent gift books. It is so interesting to get all the little tid-bits along the way. I found it was best to read the story and then all the annotations afterward, otherwise it's like being interrupted during story time.

All in all, if you are a fan of this classic horror master, this volume is worth adding to your collection or gifting to someone special!

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Absolute Album Reviews

Dragged In- LP I

Cursed Blessings Records

Toronto's Dragged In have a serious case of ADHD ... or is it Tourette's Syndrome? Whatever the fuck it is... we don't want them to get well. These guys hit every angle imaginable and I mean that in a good way.

I hear older stuff like the Melvins, My War era Black Flag, 76% Uncertain, and newer stuff like AGT and Nerve Agents. Then they slow down to Swans speed. Metal solos one minute and lots of spacey almost DK like surf moments. Even Hot Water Music and the Cows come to mind. These guys mix up so many styles it comes out their own. I can't even pick a favorite song on this yet as I like them all, so that shit I leave up to you guys. There is no filler on this album and the playing is super tight.

Get a copy from Cursed Blessings Records while they are available.

- Rentsnorter

Duran Duran 1979 Demos Part 2 -Dreaming of Your Cars

If you're expecting 80s anthems this might not be the album for you. However if you're a die hard Duran Duran fan, this album offers a deeper look into their pre-commercial/mainstream success. Headed by original singer Andy Wickett, *Dreaming of Your Cars* has a heavy new wave sound without the synth, that wouldn't have been out of place at any early 80s dance party. CD and colour vinyl out now on Cleopatra Records, as well as on all digital music platforms.

-Amanda Lawrence

Distorted Garden - Believe Anything Shock Collar Records

Distorted Garden's latest offering opens with the insanely catchy "Ru-

ined My Life" and holds the upbeat spirit throughout the rest of the five-song EP. This is chicken soup for the heart, and it packs a happy punch. Despite the chilling chorus of "I can't even breathe" the second track "Covid-19" is also cheerful and upbeat. A poppy keyboard accompanies the buzzsaw guitars and gives the song a joyful, holiday-type feel. Indeed, isn't that what we need in these scary and uncertain times? There isn't a downbeat song in the bunch, and even "She Don't Want My Baby" is hook-laden and bouncy. GG Allin might not have approved but Living Large in the Time of the Plague is buoyant and bubbly without being sappy or saccharine. Slap this baby on the turntable and dance dance dance. Just what the doctor ordered to chase the blues away.

- Chris Walter

Without Mercy - Seismic Bloodblast Distribution

Jilted grooves of the djent variety are hammered out with machine like precision on 'Thunderbird' as their brand of melodic death metal gets unveiled.

Plenty of guitar pyrotechnics thanks in part by Jeff Loomis who lays down some guest solos to push things into guitar overload.

Head spinning rhythms and de-ranked screaming turn 'Left Alone' into a seething mass of killer hornets. This track runs through all the highlights of a great melodic death metal track; the brain splattering riffs, terrifying symphonic lead lines and doubled screaming rampages. Lots to choke on here.

Overall, a very consistent sound throughout where these veterans show they still have a bottomless pit within to scoop out snarling riffs for our ungrateful enjoyment.

-Dan Potter

Twin God - Deaths Nefarious Industries

Rivers of sludgy riffage pour out the veins of this enraged giant of a noise-rock mutation. Taking cues from Shellac and Botch, replacing the metal skepticism with irate vocals that would fit just right on an Anvil record, this two song beast is something you are going to want to befriend.

'Animate' comes at you quick with upfront guitars and mathematical drumming. The ominousness is held in their ability to rip through the tension creating elements found in universe of music without touching the release gauge, as if the task at hand is to boil the listener alive in a soup of angst.

For just two tracks there is plenty of variety as 'You and I' brings forth a demented Melvins vibe and the emotions run with the wretched at all times, even during the sparse breakdowns where the dissonance actually increases.

-Dan Potter

Trillionaire - Romulus Nefarious Industries

Confrontational energy and attention to performance details bring album opener 'The Golden Goat' to a very interesting place. The song is both tuneful and challenging with soaring vocals that serenade the pulsating rhythmic complexity towards psychedelic dream states whilst carefully ripping your head off with relentlessly innovative passages of shifting ideas.

A group composed of veterans from other notable heavy bands, a myriad of influences come out to play to bounce you from Mars Volta to Dillinger Escape Plan and even some Janes Addiction in-between. The overall tone is full of melodic

modern metal, with catchy chorus' and fast guitar reflexes, all tuned for pure enjoyment.

On 'We are the Devil' awesome groove breakdowns with fiery motifs keep things heavy as powerful vocals shatter any granule of boredom that might otherwise form when listening to mid spectrum rock tracks like this one. This debut is as great a rock album that it is a metal one.

-Dan Potter

Scour - The Black EP Housecore Records

The sound of this EP can best be described as a modern reimagining of what became known as black metal mixed with elements of grind-core and bits of punk and thrash to make things more multi-cultural. Temperatures run high across the entire six-track descent as Bathory approved guttural screeches ride a bladed gust of atomic dissonance spewed out by twin guitar mayhem.

Featuring guest appearances by Erik Rutan and Pat O'Brien who each rip some hair-raising shred in the name of the father of chaos. This newish band is also notable for its lead vocalist: Mr. Philip H. Anselmo. The legend himself brings to the table a vocal delivery that one might not expect as he goes for the low grizzled barnyard hog frequencies to horrifying effect.

A truly blackened trip, this wicked release will send chills down the spine of a paraplegic.

-Dan Potter

Scalp - Domestic Extremity Creator-Destructor Records

Scalp is a violent unpredictable juggernaut of crazed energy. Each song starts fast and ends fast with no regard for humans who don't like their metal above the 200bpm mark.

Slaying it with ten tracks, this

Southern California-based brutal metallic hardcore quartet finally puts out a debut album. And it was worth the anticipation as each song is brutally heavy to the max with thunderous palm muted initiations and whiplash inducing tempos. The title track 'Domestic Extremity' seethes forward like a monster out of a cage, hunting its prey by scaring it to death.

Less is definitely more on this savage album, it's knock out after knock out.

-Dan Potter

Realize - Machine Violence Relapse Records

Taking the industrial metal revival to their cold hearts, these fellas aren't just about playing some nu-metal groove over a drum machine beat. On album opener 'Alone Against the Flames' they take the insufferable warped mission statements of Godflesh or Nine Inch Nails and proceed to add gory visuals to the disturbing text.

Not content to wallow in the past is an admirable trait and this new band clearly wants to push the sonic envelope utilizing bottom heavy guitar blasts with ear piercing drum programs that spaz out in ecstasy as the chaos levels climb to new and frightening highs. 'Ghost in the Void' is another great example as it takes the meaningless mess of existence and gives it a cyborgian make over just for the horrific sake of things.

The macabre and undesirable on these ten tracks make this release a perfect guilty pleasure for anyone disappointed about the delay of world war three.

-Dan Potter

Mustard Gas and Roses - We Are One Pax Aeternum

M.G.R. is the cinematic project helmed by Michael Gallagher,

formerly of ISIS and Cast Iron Hike. Starting out largely as a solo/instrumental project, the project has bloomed over recent years into a full band of collaborators.

This EP is full of raging post rock greatness, whether it's the howling guitar outro to 'Shadows' or the down to earth alt-country ragged vocals that you just know are the dependable tour guides last gift of earthly normalcy. Tearing through of noisy version of Joy Division's 'Exercise One' is a turn that most wouldn't expect but this band is all about using the element of surprise to its advantage.

Capping off these four tracks with yet another cover of Spiritualized 'Cop Shoot Cop' which is turned into an ode to Spacemen 3 on fentanyl.

-Dan Potter

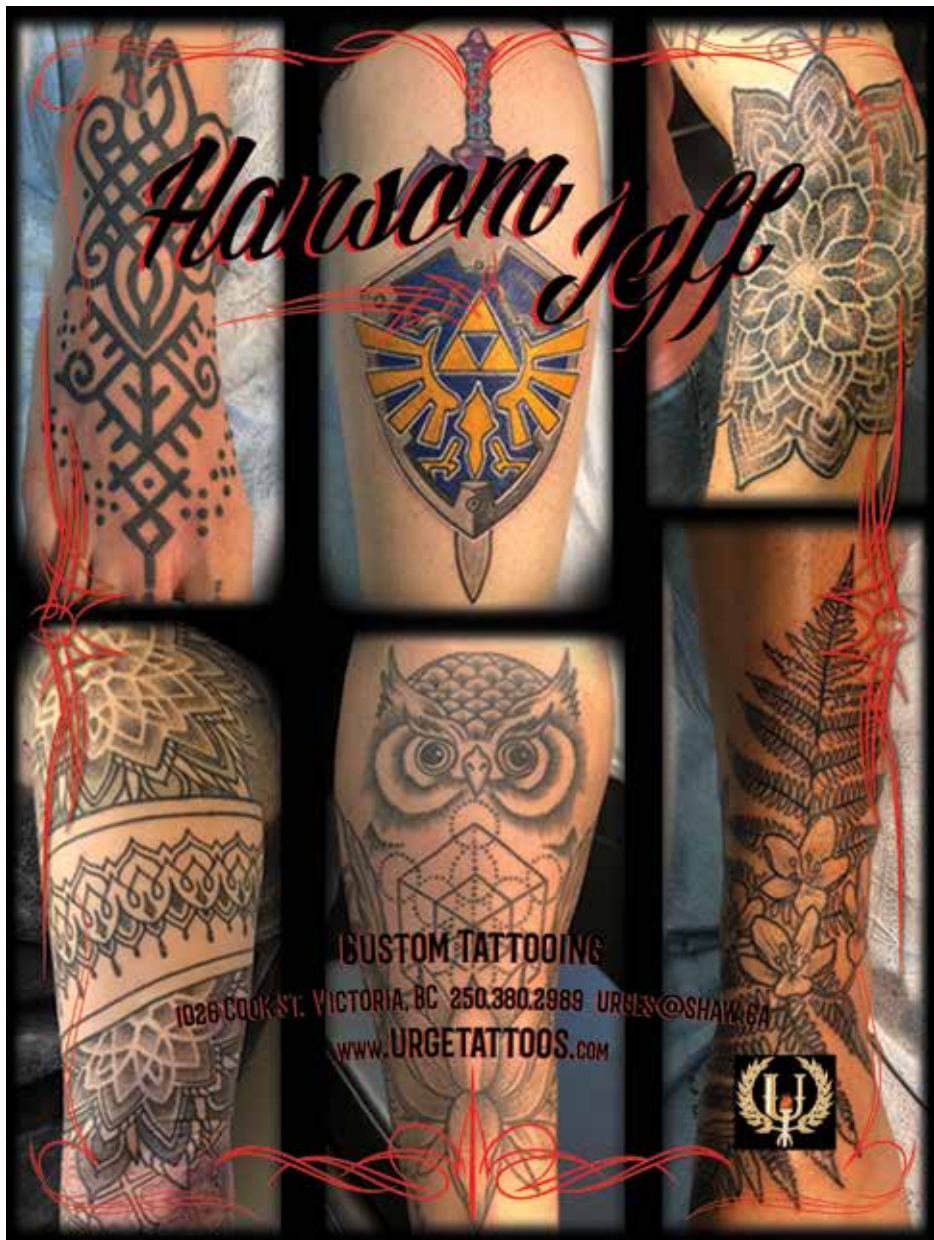
Fuck the Facts - Pleine Noirceur Noise Salvation

Face shearing at its best is what this extreme metal unit does and on opening track 'Doubt, Fear, Neglect' the surgery begins right on schedule. Proving they have enough sinister credentials to make Nails blush comes easy for them. This release presents a band with new ideas as they demonstrate on 'Aube' where an ominous vibe full of lurching doom rears its swollen head.

On 'Everything I Love is Ending' the tempo switches from slow drag to pummeling widow maker. Hearing them take hardcore punk kicking and screaming into the grindcore funhouse is an auditory treat like no other because no one does it like they can.

This, their eighth full length is probably the most diverse in tempo and aesthetic, but thankfully no singing. All screams, all the time is what we deserve.

-Dan Potter



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Absolute Album Reviews

Bleeding Out - Lifelong Death Fantasy Profound Lore

Watching the world burn needs a soundtrack and this debut album is a perfect company for when we are forced to behead each other over toilet paper. Playing the deathgrind genre to its very extreme, the tempos are neck breaking, the heavy low ended fuzz bomb dropping guitar tones are devastating, much worse than the Tunguska event in 1908. Slack jawed screams and pillaged Napalm Death grooves are wrapped around a whipping post and beaten to a bloody mess. Which is exactly what you wanted, you just didn't know it before these guys came along and

gave you a way into a world where punk rock energy and Floridian death metal could make offspring. This Toronto based band has killer instinct and they've come to steal your bride to be, put in a good word for yourself by checking them out.

-Dan Potter

The Shit Talkers True Stories De Nada

My friend Liz asked me to review her new record. I was honoured. I love her band,"The Shit Talkers".

I started by listening to it again. I tried to hit it song by song, like some kind of journalist that I'm not. It just wasn't working for me.

So let me just tell you what it's all

about for me, "The Shit Talkers", write songs that are honest and hilarious. This is full on, heart on your sleeve, punk.

They are always reminding me of what I like about The Rezillos and Captain Beefheart. The Shit Talkers are a rockfest, with tongue always firmly planted in cheek.

I think achieving humour and rock at the same time is awesome and rare, and I think everyone needs to check them out.

- Randall Steffes

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Torment (2017)

Torment opens with two naked men laying on a bed, the result of a night of passionate, drunken lovemaking. The smaller of the two gets up and explores the home while pocketing some money from his unconscious lover. He unlocks a door to find another man bound and bloodied. The awakened lover appears behind him and proceeds to smother him with a rag until he's out cold.

Thus begins our foray into the John Wayne Gacy inspired film. Loosely based as it is (as loose as the poor victims' rectums by the end of this), our antagonistic clown is a tattooed up heroin user, which Gacy was not. It is safe to say he isn't hiding his activities from any family members either.

The Adam Ford directed nasty is short and gets into the sexual violence quickly, as the Insane Clown Rapist reenacts the Cannibal Corpse song "Fucked with a Knife" on the bound victim as the other man watches. Pogo saws off the head of his lover and then has his way with it.

Spent after this long, passionate night of hatemaking, clowny lights up a cigarette and gets ready for the next victim, who is tied to a chair with his ass exposed. Pogo considers different objects to put into the victim's arsehole. We see a "rectum view" camera shot as he chooses a bottle, to the victim's discomfort.

Torment is good for what it is - an exercise in showing the extremes of male sexual torture. There are faults, however. The dialogue, which is mainly whimpers and sadistic laughing, at times doesn't sync up, which goes a long way to remind us that this is only a movie, albeit a sick one.

- Ryan Dyer

Freaky

Body swap films have a long and entertaining history in film. Often, the stories tend to be morality tales, having someone walk in another's shoes to see how hard their life really is. With comedic films, the more

opposite the people switching are to each other, the better the jokes, usually. The actors having to play two completely different roles also adds to the entertainment, while showing their capabilities of playing different personalities in the same film. Examples include *Freaky Friday*, with a mother swapping bodies with her daughter and *Face/Off*, which has Nicolas Cage at his most frenzied swapping faces with John Travolta.

Freaky (directed by the Paranormal



Activity series' Christopher Landon) is the horror version of such body swapping films. It sees a deranged, masked killer (Vince Vaughn) known as the Blissfield Butcher switch bodies with a teenage girl due to stabbing her with a magical dagger.

As the spell needs to be broken within 24 hours or the body swap will be permanent, Vaughn and her friends are in a race against time to switch back and set things straight once more. As the film is a horror/comedy, the swap is done more for shocks and entertainment value than anything else. The contrast of the silent, cunning killer and extroverted teen really fits in *Freaky*, but only due to the performers pulling it off.

Vince Vaughn acting like a teenage girl is humorous. It brings to mind Jack Black's recent performance in the *Jumanji* movies, in which a girl takes over his avatar in the game. Much of the humor comes from this huge man trying to convince his high school friends that he is a girl and a truly laugh-out-loud moment comes when he confesses his admiration to his crush, and they have a mini kiss section in a car. Vaughn playing the sadistic criminal at the beginning of the movie in his own body is also handled with ease. He previously showed his dark side in *Psycho* and *Brawl in Cell Block 99*, so those only familiar with his comedic films are in for a surprise.

Kathryn Newton does equally well playing the bloodthirsty killer now trapped inside of her body. She conveys quite the ruthless femme fatale. Think Charles Lee Ray in the body of the innocent Chucky doll in *Child's Play* - just waiting for the right moment to pounce and when she is found out, weaseling her way out to

plan another attack later.

Will the bodies be swapped back to their original places? The conclusion will have you pondering.

Freaky is lite entertainment, sprinkled with blood, which is heavy on the laughs. Escape your own body and focus on the screen for a while to catch this.

- Ryan Dyer

COVID 19 - The Impact on Asian Cinema

The film industry has grinded to a halt since COVID-19's reign of terror. Apart from cinemas closing and premiers for many blockbuster films being postponed until next year, production on films has also stopped. Box office revenue declined in Asia during the first quarter of 2020 with China taking the worst blow with a fall of 97.4% in ticket sales. As film productions have been halted, numerous people in the film industry have been forced out of a job. This short documentary by director Ranjeet S. Marwa sits down via Zoom with three Asian actors to speak about the effects COVID-19 has had on Asian cinema and their own lives.

Sunny Pang (*Headshot*), based in Singapore, was unable to finish a film in production in another country due to the virus. Being two thirds Chinese, he laments the problems with finger pointing regarding the cause of the virus and encourages finding a solution to the current problems instead. Nick Khan (*Invincible*) also touches upon the relationship between fear



and blame - how when people are afraid they'll blame whoever they want. Despite the negatives, he believes that the world is healing during this troubling time. Oka Antara (*The Raid 2*) tries to look at the positives of lockdown-reconnecting with family, and planning for life after the lockdown.

For post COVID film productions, Pang thinks there will be changes - lower budgets for productions in some countries while quality control will be in full effect in places like South Korea. Antara speaks of the Indonesian film market - how big foreign film makers were interested in the country for a project, which is now an uncertainty. Khan thinks the future of film making will be more raw, with very few people working on the film and the film makers needing to be crafty to pull off the production, or like this documentary, using the technology at hand to create something viable.

- Ryan Dyer



Absolute Live Reviews



Fuck Off 2020 Shit Year - New Years Party
December 31, DAFA Club, Tianjin China

With recent COVID cases shutting down every club in Beijing on New Year's Eve, it was in question as to whether this show was actually happening. Beijing band Scare the Children somehow made it to Tianjin - bypassing the no-travel rule and the police didn't show up to crash this party. The show felt like a fitting "FUCK YOU" climax to this godawful year, and would pursue in spite of any barrier which would cause its cancellation.

While it wasn't exactly KISS in Dubai, this celebration did include five worthy bands who all wore some type of face concealing device - be it masks or makeup. The first, Bad Tailor, was a doom band fronted by someone looking like Frank the Bunny from Donnie Darko. This type of music is rare in China, and for the first time in a few years, I wished I had a joint.

Next up were the Chinese version of Slipknot, whom sounded more like Rammstein, High Song. The orange

jump-suited band pounded out some keyboard sprinkled industrial metal which made the audience get their groove on regardless of wearing thick coats and toques.

The bar was freezing near the stage, though there was a heater near the back of the pub turned up to a hellish temperature. The next band, new blackened death metal purveyors Bergrisar, seemed perfect for this cold, tight venue. The breath of the band members was clearly visible as they blasted out fiery anthems of war.

Sick kids sometimes need a teddy. Cold kids sometimes need a teddy. The band, Teddy, is not for comfort or hugging. They are a nasty, speedy, middle finger dressed in a gimp mask whom perfectly convey the staggering frustration it is to live life regularly in 2020. To have them at this show was integral in helping the people here give one last "fuck off" to the year.

I don't know how Scare the Children made it to this show, but they did. Hailing from Beijing, this was a blessing in disguise as there would be no way to perform there on this

night due to the bars being shut down. The band is a shock rock/nu metal monster wearing ghoulish and disturbing masks not dissimilar to Mushroomhead. Their theatrical encore to this evening certainly put a cap on the year. Art must sometimes reflect the world we live in and tonight it did resemble the year in a nutshell - ugly, leprous, nightmarish and discomforting, just like the performers tonight.

-Ryan Dyer

The Next Fest 66 Livehouse, Nov 1, Tianjin China

During the months spent isolated during the coronavirus outbreak, it seems promoters and bands have been busy. This new festival, entitled The Next Fest, is just one of the newer multi-band festivals popping up in China in the latter months of 2020. Each festival is fairly broad in a musical sense and has bands of different genres, which goes a long way in bringing in a larger group of fans. The Next Fest featured nine bands and took place at the 66 Livehouse in Tianjin, which is quickly becoming the go-to place for larger, but not stadium-sized, touring bands.



The first to perform was death metal act Bergrisar, who started off with an atomic blast in one of the heaviest sets of the night. These corpse painted fiends handed out blackened blastbeats like leftover Halloween candy.

Wearing Madball shirts, Six Four One embodied the spirit of NY hardcore with a set resembling a Bronx street fight. They demanded early walls of deaths as people still piled in the venue and then piled into themselves in a scene which was a crude contrast to the social distancing still going on in most of the world.

The one band I would say were the odd one out on this night were Cosmos. Dressed in loose robes and standing rather still on the stage, their prog soundscapes mixed with metalcore vocals was interesting but not very rousing for the audience. Still, their musicianship was appreciated with a rousing applause at the end of their set.

The Will On Kill is a band of strapping young lads who brought a contemporary deathcore pizzazz to the night. The name of the band bugs me every time I see it - shouldn't it be The Will To Kill? Regardless, they brought a sublime, youthful aggression to the stage with demonic growls and well placed clean choruses.

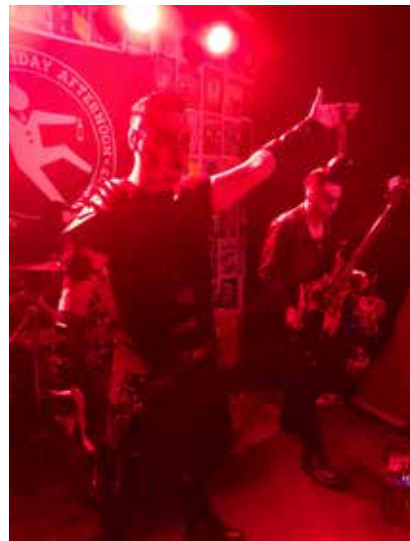
Known for being the premier Chi-

nese folk metal band, Dream Spirit arrived on stage in full costume ready to spellbind the audience. Since the last time I saw them there seems to have been a few lineup changes, but the classic sound of high quality folk metal was as clear as ever, which had the crowd celebrating like it was Chinese New Year.

Who said nu metal is dead? I didn't know what to expect from Mega Soul, and when I heard they were nu metal, set my expectations a little low, but this band was truly punishing in a live sense and their new nu aesthetic was anything but hokey. True, they did have a few cliches like tormented vocals, and even did a tease for Korn's "Blind", but then tore into one of their original tracks which was like Mudvayne at their heaviest - the bass sound almost jumping out of the speakers and possessing the people in the pit.

Continuing with the nu bands of the night, a lethal dose of Chinese rap metal was what we got with Liquid Oxygen. Starting off with a freestyle rap, which lead into a brutal breakdown, the band, with a skull logo surrounded by two bottles of what I imagine to be vodka (but could be baijiu) were equal parts street and sawmill. At the conclusion of their set, they had the hottest girls in the place (and a lone guy who wanted to boogie) get up on stage to dance to a final sickening outro.

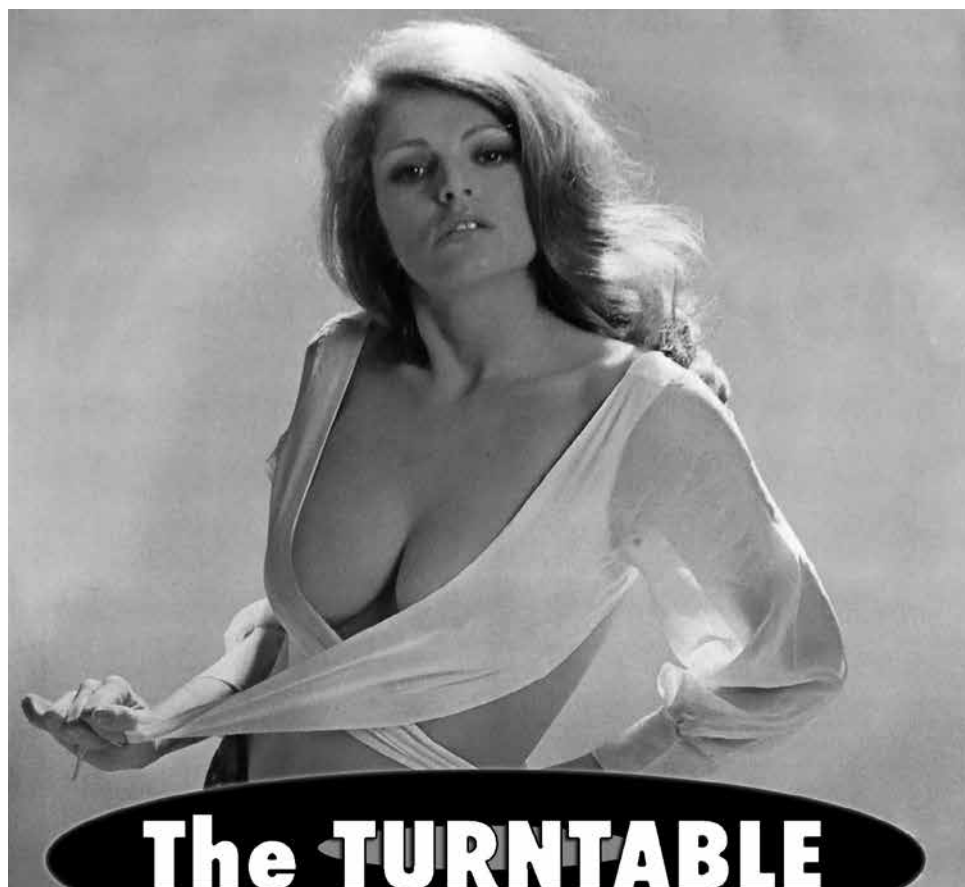
A microphone stand decorated with horns and animal skulls was set up on the stage for the emergence of China's oldest black metal band, Ritual Day. Introduced to the western world through Sam Dunn's Global



Metal, the band has been at it for 20 years now, ever evolving their craft with added traditional instrumentation, blackened atmosphere and on stage theatrics. The band, wearing their now iconic corpse paint, played their half symphonic, half thrash barrage set to an audience who looked on in astonishment.

The most break-neck breakdowns were reserved for the final band of the night, Awake Mountains. Another youthful deathcore ensemble who utilize clean vocals in areas, the band and especially the singer channeled western genre staples like Suicide Silence into their look and sound, while bringing some elements of originality such as spoken word sampling. The audience had been there for a long time, but I had to give it to these guys - their sheer energy woke everyone up like an adrenaline injection to the heart for one last showing in the pit.

-Ryan Dyer



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